

House, but I certainly hold his colleague, the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Pinard), responsible for his sleazy treatment of Parliament.

Let us go back to the genesis of the changes. Let us go back to what the task force had to say. Let me read from page 70:

The Task Force also favours the extension of maternity benefits to adoptive parents. These changes will result in much more equitable maternity provisions. The earnings interruptions of adoptive and natural parents will receive similar recognition, while elimination of the special maternity conditions will remove the potential inequities contained in such rules.

Then the report goes on with regard to maternity benefits, which comments I think are worth putting on the record because they sum up the view of the Official Opposition with respect to Section 46. We read:

Return to a strict physical incapacity basis for maternity benefits would re-establish a clear philosophical foundation for their payment and achieve significant cost savings. However, in the judgment of the Task Force, it would constitute a significant step backwards in social policy.

That is the judgment of my colleagues and myself as well. This paragraph continues:

In a period in which women's labour force participation is increasing steadily, such a change would greatly reduce the income protection capacity of UI as it applies to working women. Since it would contradict the intent of the 1975 Statute Law, referred to above, it would be difficult to justify.

Indeed, it would be difficult to justify. That is what the task force had to say two years ago.

Why has it taken the Minister of Employment and Immigration two years to come to the House with these long overdue amendments? Why does he come to the House and say we only have one day to deal with them in all stages? That is the question which the Minister has to address to the House and to the women of this nation who have had to suffer the inequities of Section 46 for two years during which changes could have been and should have been made if the recommendations of the task force had been implemented. The state of the Unemployment Insurance Fund is relevant. We will have more to say about this. I hope the Minister will address himself to it when we get to Committee of the Whole.

• (1150)

Why did the task force feel so strongly about Section 46 back in July, 1981? Obviously it was recognizing changes in the patterns of the work force, the emergence of the role of women as a major and permanent factor in the work force. I suspect it was also looking into the future because, based on our experience in the last recession when we lost have a half million jobs, the disadvantaged are the first to go and the last to be rehired.

In terms of the work force, who are the disadvantaged? The disadvantaged are women, young people and native people. That is why we look at the unemployment statistics today with a great deal of concern. For example, we find that in April, 1983 609,000 women were unemployed as opposed to 490,000 last year. We are told that this is going to get worse as we get into the new microchip society, the new industrial revolution in high-tech.

Unemployment Insurance Act

The task force was obviously able to anticipate what would happen in terms of the experience of the last recession. That, of course, is precisely what has happened. That is why there are so many women and young people unemployed in this country today. That is why the prospects of women being rehired are diminishing. It is because of the implementation of the new technology.

I want to talk for a minute about where we are in terms of women in the work force. My colleague from Kingston and the Islands (Miss MacDonald) will have to say more about that. It does speak to the position in which we find ourselves today with respect to women in the work force. Not only are they behind, but they continue to fall behind in terms of being discriminated against with respect to the work force.

Very simply, to relate the impact of high-tech on women is merely to look at the service jobs of the country, the majority of which are filled by women, and to see what word processors are doing to clerical occupations in the country. We see that in our own offices today. Women let go as a result of the recession in many services unfortunately will not be rehired. That is why I believe it will be necessary before too long to start thinking in terms of restructuring and changing the Unemployment Insurance Act to make it more relevant to the reality of the situation, a situation in which the Government, as part of its policy, bases its fiscal and monetary policy on projections which will see unemployment in double-digit dimensions go through the eighties and into the early nineties. We had that on the authority of the Minister of Finance in the course of his budget presentation to this House.

We now come to fishermen's benefits. This, of course, is not only a result of the decision handed down by the Supreme Court in the Vicky Silk case which was, as the Minister indicated, a decision by the Supreme Court stating that the Canada Employment Commission had no authority under the Act to make special benefits or regulations for fishermen. The consequence of that is the changes before us in the amendments which the Minister has brought to the House.

As well, there are the recommendations of the Kirby Task Force dealing with other provisions with respect to Unemployment Insurance benefits for fishermen. For example, there is the right of fishermen to draw Unemployment Insurance benefits in the fresh water regions of the country.

We welcome the changes that are being brought forward today. Some of my colleagues are concerned about the impact this will have on the Unemployment Insurance Fund. Hopefully, some of them will express that concern during the course of the debate.

We are concerned that the Government has seen fit to bring in this Bill at the eleventh hour, holding the gun to our head as Parliamentarians and forcing us to deal with all phases of the Bill in one day. That, of course, does not, nor is it intended to in any way, diminish our support for what the Bill seeks to achieve, which is to close the inequities in the Unemployment Insurance Act so that women who have to seek recourse under the maternity provisions of the Act will have the same benefits