

Supply

excess of the VER requirement up to a maximum of six weeks.

The member from Gander, Newfoundland remembers the fight we had with Buddy Cullen and his bureaucrats. We remember the fight well.

What was a social contract between workers, their employers and the government the Liberals in this House began to dismantle to the great dismay of Bryce Mackasey who had been the originator and the introducer of the 1971 act. He was a very sad and bitter man. He commented constantly on the fact that every time they wanted to chip away at the social contract which we call the Unemployment Insurance Act they always pointed to cheaters and said that it encouraged malaise among the unemployed. They said that it took away incentives.

I want to point out all of this chipping away, particularly to the new Liberal members. My colleague from Gander, Newfoundland, and I went through these fights together. He fought with the New Democrats, and there were Tories too. God knows what their political machinations and motivations were. But we fought it and we lost.

What we see in Bill C-21 did not originate with Tories. This whole approach to chipping away the social programs of this country, whether it is unemployment insurance, deindexing old age pensions, family allowances or cut-backs to VIA, did not start with these Tories. It began with the Liberals.

Let us not kid ourselves. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. They cannot fancy it up and come in here pretending they are the great defenders of the unemployment insurance program. No. I was here. I have lived through it.

Along came this gang in 1984. In this gang in 1984 we had the Minister of Finance make an economic statement. He said: "Well, we have to do something about unemployment insurance. We have to cut it. We have to do something about unemployment insurance." He proceeded to cut it.

He suggested some changes, continuing in the same trend. He said that henceforth pension income would be considered earned income. He said that vacation pay will

be used in calculating unemployment insurance benefits, and that severance pay will be included.

We have once more the unemployment insurance program, which is part of the social contract, moving toward means testing. From income replacement we now move to a means-tested program.

Having put that in place the government then hired at an expense of millions of dollars Mr. Claude Forget who studied unemployment insurance and came down with the Forget Commission Report. It was music to the Tories' ears, except they had a problem. They had a problem selling it in the country.

The Standing Committee of the House of Commons on Labour, Employment and Immigration made up of members from all sides of the House studied the Forget Commission Report and we passed 89 recommendations unanimously after looking at it. I would have called that report "back to the future" because what it sought to do was to re-establish the social contract, to return the UI program to its pristine position of 1971.

We recognized the growing need to include part-time workers in recognition of a growing trend. We made those recommendations unanimously.

Mr. Young (Beaches—Woodbine): What happened to them?

Mr. Rodriguez: My friend asks what happened to them. They got put on the shelf.

Instead, after the 1988 election we have this Draconian proposal of Bill C-21 which completely removes the government from the unemployment insurance program. It removes the government from any responsibility from what was before a tripartite arrangement, a contract between the governors and the governed, the employers and the employees.

• (1630)

Now with Bill C-21, it has taken all the moves that the Liberals started in 1976 and 1978 and extended them to their logical conclusion. The government now has removed itself from any participation in the social programs.

What the government has done is the first step on the road to what it has called privatization. Since the Conservatives have taken this position of removing themselves from putting any money into the Unemployment Insurance Act, then they have no right to call the