

Mr. Reilly: Blackmail is a very mild word to use for that kind of procedure. We were told that unless we suspended all our critical faculties, we would stand convicted of taking away money from the poor. The government was joined in this gibberish by their friends down the way. Now we hear how they are being treated by the Social Credit party.

Having created unemployment deliberately because they did not know of any other way to deal with inflation, the government stubbornly persisted in its wilful ways despite the best economic advice in the country. Having manifested all the concern and compassion we might expect from a beetle in the face of repeated demonstrations of suffering by the poor people of this country, they now attempt to blame us for their own foolishness. The lawyers in this House know the story, but the demeanour of the crowd across the way reminds me of nothing so much as that of the young man who, having committed double patricide, comes into court pleading for mercy because he is an orphan.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Reilly: We sought to maintain a limit on the amount that could be advanced from general revenues into this account. We sought to do that for very good reasons. First, there was one in the act. It was put in there at the behest of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) who did not trust his colleague the hon. member for Verdun. He thought he was too philanthropic, that he might give away all the money to the pregnant women and, therefore, had a \$800 million ceiling put on by the Department of Finance.

I do not blame the hon. member for Verdun and the government for being caught with their nose in the jam pot, but the ceiling was put in there, and apparently for good cause. The proof of that was given this afternoon by the hon. member for Moncton (Mr. Thomas). This was during the miscellaneous estimates committee evidence on January 16 of this year when the President of the Treasury Board was asked why there was a limit on these advances. My colleague, the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen), stated:

There seems little purpose in having a ceiling at all in the act under those conditions.

The President of the Treasury Board replied as follows:

No, Mr. Chairman, I suggest there is a very good purpose in having a ceiling. This particular ceiling, I suggest, was put in in order that parliament would have an opportunity to examine the reasons for the circumstances surrounding any sums in excess of this, which is precisely what we are engaged in now.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Reilly: There he sits with his face averted. Well he might. He should turn his face to the wall. He should resign from the cabinet.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Reilly: I do not know what he thought we were talking about that morning, but he was obviously in profound conflict with his colleagues on the front benches. Maybe they should take a little recess in order to get their facts straight. Here we have the President of the Treasury

25714—65½

Unemployment Insurance Act

Board, the man who next to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) is responsible for the regulation and being a watchdog of public expenditures, saying that the ceiling was a good thing. Why? So parliament can examine the facts if we go over the \$800 million. It is a red flag. It is a check. We did not say it: we asked, and he told us. Why? We tried to find that out.

We operated under a massive handicap in that committee. First, the Minister of Manpower and Immigration was laid up with the common cold. In his place he sent the Minister of Justice (Mr. Lang). There is a performer! I fear for the people of Canada if that man is going to be administering justice for the next little while. I really do. He has his back to me, as well he might. He came in there, danced around and tiptoed through the tulips. You never saw such a performance in your life. We could not get a straight answer out of him even if we tried to buy it.

Mr. Lang: You would not know one if you saw it.

Mr. Reilly: Now he speaks. That is the first simple, declarative sentence he has spoken in all the time I have known him. We tried for a variety of reasons but the chief among them was the reason given by the President of the Treasury Board. That was not on January 16, 1971; that was not on January 16, 1972; it was on January 16, 1973, just a few weeks ago, in the committee discussing the very thing we are discussing here. We tried to understand why the President of the Treasury Board was in such obvious and deep conflict with his colleagues. We could not determine why they wanted this clause to come out. The Minister of Justice said, while it had been thought at one time that a limit on these advances was desirable, more mature reflection had shown that it was no longer desirable.

Mr. Hees: I wrote that and rejected it ten years ago.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Reilly: In any event, Mr. Speaker, mature reflection persuaded them that it should now come out. The phrase "mature reflection", as we have seen by the obvious delight it causes some members, has a fine ring to it. As the British would have it, it is all swank and no knickers because it really does not mean anything. It does not tell us anything of what we should know, which is precisely why the government wants the ceiling removed. They never told us. The President of the Treasury Board gave us good cause for keeping it but there has been no spokesman for the government to tell us why it should be removed. I have to confess that I am perplexed by that kind of performance. The minister responsible for the bill does not mean to favour us with a statement in its defence. We were supposed to sort of absorb his philosophy by some process of osmosis. This might work as far as my colleagues way down on the left are concerned; they are close enough. But it does not work over here. We do not understand. It does not tell us what we need to know. Perhaps the phrase "mature reflection" means "second thoughts after you have been caught out," or maybe if you set a watchdog to watch, it is almost certain you are going to catch somebody.