

Unemployment Insurance Act

to answer. He asked: "What information was withheld from the committee?" I have already dealt with the matter of the information that could have been available to this committee from the advisory committee on unemployment insurance and I do not want to repeat it. The odd thing I have found so far in the debate is that everybody excuses himself for not hearing the members of the advisory committee, and particularly the labour representatives of the advisory committee, by saying that they are no longer members of the committee. We know they felt obliged, through lack of confidence in the government that appointed them, to resign. The point is that what the industrial relations committee should have examined those people about was the decision not after they resigned but the decision, examination, information and knowledge that they had with respect to things before they resigned when they advised this government that it was undesirable to do what is proposed in this bill but rather to increase the government contribution to the scheme because in many elements it was a welfare scheme, it was a government type of disbursement that should not be levied upon the long time contributors to this scheme.

I simply want to put this question on the record of this house, particularly for the benefit of young members whom I would have thought had particular interest in parliamentary rights. I want to ask the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi whether he will look at section 20 of the Unemployment Insurance Act. I want to ask him whether on reflection, whether he sits on the opposition side or the government side, he would consider what he said in the industrial relations committee about being rude to a witness even of this prominence is valid?

Mr. Graftey: You were rude to all the witnesses, though.

Mr. Benidickson: Will the hon. member say I was rude to all the witnesses.

Mr. Graftey: No, I withdraw that.

Mr. Benidickson: The hon. member is very fair to me. On the other hand, having regard to section 20 of the Unemployment Insurance Act, which designates certain public officials as the investment committee under the act, will he say that this precludes him, should he at a future time be sitting in the opposition, and in a committee as a member of the opposition, from the right to examine in a committee set up by parliament a witness as to how many times the investment committee met in a fiscal year?

I never heard of anything more scandalous. I know of no case where a majority has

[Mr. Benidickson.]

utilized its strength to a greater degree to snuff off investigation of a committee in charge of a fund involving a paper value of \$490 million, and everybody says now this is irrespective of the obligations of at least two of the members of the committee with relation to their other functions. For instance, we were not attempting to ask the governor of the Bank of Canada about his functions with relation to the Bank of Canada. We were asking him only about his obligations to parliament which asked, in fact demanded that he be one of the three members of the investment committee.

I am quite satisfied that on reflection some of the younger members of the house who served on the committee, and served very effectively, will wonder about the view they took that it was a rude and improper inquiry and that it was not desirable to ask an official, designated to be a member of the investment committee in a statute passed by parliament, for information as to how many times the committee had met in the course of a certain fiscal year. We were steamrollered with respect to that matter. There is no question about that. The investment committee was brought before the industrial relations committee as a result of a motion made by two supporters of the government. That does not mean that we in the other parties would not have wanted to do the same thing. But the point is that they moved the motion and having brought the governor of the bank there they then supported him in saying that it was not the committee's business as to how many times the investment committee, created by statute, had met in the course of a certain 12-month period. I have been here since 1945 and I have never heard anything that seemed to be more in derogation of parliamentary rights than the statement that "it is none of your business how many times we met in the last 12 months". This stand was supported by the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi and many others elected to the House of Commons only recently. I do not derogate in any way the value of their contribution but I want to emphasize again what would have been said if the present Minister of Finance had been the opposition critic and a statement was made by a government witness appointed by statute that "this is none of your business".

Clause agreed to.

Clause 2 agreed to.

On clause 3.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Can the minister tell us what revenue he expects will be derived from the change in clause 3?