

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

dren gets so large that the total cost exceeds a certain amount, that it be stopped? There is no such thing at all. Why, then, do my friends to my right want to impose a ceiling on the amount that is available to unemployed people as long as they are getting their benefits under the provisions laid down under the act?

• (2140)

We have veterans pensions and veterans allowances. When veterans meet the conditions and pass the tests of the Canadian Pension Commission, they get the pension that is in the schedule. Nobody says, "Oh, but there must be parliamentary control. There must be a limit to how much we can pay out". We have war veterans allowances. If veterans meet the conditions of the War Veterans Allowance Act, they get their money. There is no Tory saying, "We must have parliamentary control. We must have a limit." Not at all.

The Canada Assistance Plan works much the same way. In that case the federal government even underwrites what the provinces do. As long as the provinces meet certain conditions laid down in the Canada Assistance Plan, they can pay supplements to their pensioners, get various programs under way in the social welfare field and collect 50 per cent of the cost from Ottawa. Nowhere is there any ceiling or provision that says they cannot get this when they exceed a certain amount of money. What is it that is wrong with unemployed people, in the minds of my friends to the right, that they must be pilloried in the way they are being pilloried in this House tonight and being told that they cannot get their money?

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Some hon. Members:** Shame!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** My hon. friends to my right do not like the reference to their not getting their money. They know that if this bill is not passed in the next two or three days, the money which the Unemployment Insurance Commission now has for the payment of unemployment insurance benefits will run out and there will be a cessation or a hiatus in the paying of unemployment insurance benefits.

A few years back there was a crisis with regard to unemployment insurance. Our friends in the other place held up a bill that had some extra money for the unemployment insurance fund of those days. They held it up for the weekend, that is all. The result was that some payments were delayed for a day or two. At that time I was able, as I have seldom been able in all the years that I have been in this House, to get unanimous consent to a motion to debate my bill to abolish the Senate. Why? Because this House was furious that the Senators took action that delayed the bill over a weekend which held up for a day or two the payment of unemployment insurance benefits.

The members of the official opposition are now taking a stand the result of which can be the cessation of the payment of benefits on Wednesday or Thursday of this week certainly until February 15, if not longer. I suggest this is an irresponsible position to take. It puts this House in the position where we ought as soon as possible to say

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]

that this bill is justified, it ought to be passed and the same principles that we apply to the payment of old age pensions, family allowances, veterans benefits, and so on, should apply here.

We are not giving the unemployed a chance to dip their fingers into any till. We are just saying that this sovereign parliament of Canada passed an Unemployment Insurance Act that states when unemployed people meet certain conditions, they shall get their benefits.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** No responsible Member of Parliament has the right to take a stand which interferes with those benefits. For these reasons we feel that this bill should be passed at this time. We will not lose parliamentary control. Parliamentary control was written into the Unemployment Insurance Act itself. Although my hon. friends may not know it, the Department of Finance has to report on these matters all the time. It reports appear in the *Canada Gazette*, part I, every month. These reports include the state of loans and advances that are made. These things are not done in secret. We know the state of the loans. We know the state of the old age security account. These things are all public. At budget time, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) has to give a full accounting. We have control over supply. We have control over the government. We have far better control if it is done this way than the sort of blind and secret \$800 million that the minister was able to use. I think that was a mistake and it is time for it to be put out.

In view of what happened this afternoon I thought my hon. friend was going to move an amendment to state their opposition to clause 2 of the bill. I even drafted it for him when I was speaking on a point of order earlier today.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** He did not move the amendment but he called upon the House to reject clause 2. I really become astounded at the way these people can go both ways. They talk about this whole business as though it is a monetary financial scandal. They say, "We don't know the cost. The people of Canada are having to pay for it." Yet when the government comes in with a proposal that the working capital necessary to keep the fund in balance should be an advance only, they say, "Oh, no; make it an appropriation." That would put it back on the taxpayers of Canada. I do not know what the *Globe and Mail* and some of the other papers would say then. They would probably wonder what happened to their Tory friends.

Let us give this new piece of legislation a decent trial. To take the Tory line would be not only to interfere with the unemployed getting their benefits but would bring an end to this fair trial. I think the position my friends to the right are taking is completely irresponsible.

I am as much for parliamentary control over the public purse in a real way as anybody in this House. I am for an Unemployment Insurance Act that is better than this one, but we have a particular and immediate situation. We have an act that is in trouble because unemployment got