

grams, the answer, surely, is to reduce unemployment by even 1 per cent. If this were done, the consequent savings would be three times the saving that will be realized by the government's restraint program as it affects the 65-year olds and over.

Mr. Symes: Five times.

Mr. Rodriguez: Certainly five times. We on this side of the House are not alone in recommending deletion of the part of the clause having to do with the 65-year olds. The Canadian Labour Congress, which represents a vast number of those organized into trade unions, has advised that this is a regressive step at this point in time. Unemployment continues to rise with every monthly report from Statistics Canada. The Canadian Council on Social Development representatives appeared before the committee and also recommended that this amendment be not carried. But the minister is not interested in these opinions. He has already had advice from above, literally and realistically, and he intends to follow that advice.

If there is any doubt about the restraint program, the minister makes provision later in the bill for that particular clause to become effective January 1, 1976. This is why we have called this the Christmas present from the Liberal government to the 65-year olds and over. It is of interest to note that at least one member on the government side has had the courage, foresight, humanity and sensitivity to realize that what is being put forward in the legislation, by his colleagues on that side of the House, is indeed regressive and hits the 65-year olds and over very hard.

Mr. Symes: He is obviously a man of principle.

Mr. Rodriguez: He certainly is, and when the time comes for the vote on this amendment he will stand and be counted with the progressive forces in this House. As I have said, the minister hopes to save the plan some money, and I have suggested that he can do this by embarking on programs to create employment.

There is one other point to be made. This party has not suggested in any way, either inside or outside the House, that any person who does not conform to the act should collect employment insurance benefits. We must stress that point. The minister will later rise in this House and say that somehow or other we on this side of the House want these people to continue to rip off the unemployment insurance system. That is his own idea; he thinks that somehow or other the 65-year olds are dishonest. That is not our view on this side of the House at all.

We have said consistently that the minister can enforce the act. He has benefit control which, in effect, can sort out those 65-year olds and over who are not available for work and those seeking work actively and are capable of work. The minister should be progressive in dealing with this problem. It is surely not beyond the technical and administrative ability of the nabobs in the Unemployment Insurance Commission to separate legitimate claimants under the act from the illegitimate. That is what we said in committee as well as on second reading. This is what the government should be doing, rather than wiping out holubolus the 65-year olds as if they did not even exist.

Unemployment Insurance Act

I know that the minister is going to reply, "We certainly don't deny the 65-year olds the right to work, and there is nothing in the amendment that prevents them from seeking work", and so on and so forth, ad nauseam. That is what he said in committee, as though he had been programmed to say that by the Unemployment Insurance Commission officials, who will be well taken care of when they are 65. They will not have to worry about collecting unemployment insurance, unlike those who have no pension plan through their employer but must depend on continuing to look for work, and to take work if it is offered, beyond the age of 65.

As I have already said, we are concerned with the 65 to 69-year olds presently active in the work force or who will become active in the work force. The minister tried to hide behind the argument in committee that somehow this gives the 65-year olds security. It is all one government and it is responsible for the old age security program in this country, the Canada Pension Plan and every other piece of social legislation at the federal level. The minister should not be allowed to duck or to escape his responsibility as a minister of this government to keep progressive legislation on the books, making it more progressive, and not regressive as he has suggested in this particular clause.

● (1640)

I urge hon. members of this House to stand and be counted when the opportunity arises, saying to the minister and his nabobs in the commission, who I might say are ill-advising him, that we do not want those 65 years of age and over, who must work and conform to the act, treated in such a shoddy manner by a government which starts restraint with others rather than with itself.

[Translation]

Mr. Charles-Eugène Dionne (Kamouraska): Mr. Speaker, I already had the opportunity on second reading to say what I thought about that bill concerning individuals 65 years of age and over. Really I am surprised to see that the minister and his advisers have not seen fit to make proper amendments to that bill. It is truly unfair to try to have those regulations passed for the good reason that 65-year-old persons who have contributed during 30 or 34 years to the unemployment insurance fund are still anxious to work and take advantage of all the benefits of a legislation passed several years ago. And suddenly without any warning, the government makes such a decision.

I had even suggested that if only to lessen the after effects of this clause of the legislation we could at least do as we did when the old age security act was amended and begin at 69 years of age, then 68, 67, 65. I do not know why such a procedure cannot be used, because at least the older people would not be so taken aback with that unfair legislation.

But no, it seems the government wants to have this piece of legislation passed just as it is. I have also had on numerous occasions the opportunity to say that the main clauses of this act are always intended to protect the fund and, in the present circumstances, I would very much like to hear someone prove the contrary, because according to information provided us in committee, I find what they mean by that subparagraph "repercussions on implementing conditions". Indeed, these repercussions mean: dis-