

*The Address—Mr. Allmand*

The Speech from the Throne also talks of changes in the Unemployment Insurance Act. But it does not state exactly what it has in mind. We can presume, however, that it wants to cut here as well. We will be looking very closely to see what the Government will propose. I know there are some in this country who will say it is good, that unemployment insurance is too high, it encourages laziness and all those other sort of slogans that we hear from time to time. That is an extremely narrow view. Unemployment insurance was introduced by a Liberal Government in the 1940s following the great depression of the 1930s when there was no unemployment insurance and people had to stand in breadlines. The unemployed had no way of paying for their groceries or for their rent, the basic necessities of life. Unemployment insurance was introduced by Liberals to take care of that situation. It must be kept in place and be kept up to date to still take care of that situation.

Of course there are abuses. But the abuses are relatively low and they are far less than the abuses that are made with respect to the tax system. We must correct the abuses. We will support measures to correct abuses, but we also want to make certain that there are no savage cuts in the system.

Madam Speaker, I see that you are telling me that my time is coming to an end. At the beginning of the last Parliament the Government said that this was a high priority. It appointed the Forget Commission. It sat for over a year and made a report with about 50 recommendations. The Government did not accept any of them. It referred the report to the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, which had a Tory majority. We studied the question for more than a year and made about 70 recommendations. The Government did not implement any of them. It could not make up its mind. It completely copped out on the whole question. Here we are again about to go through the same exercise.

I want to say this to the Government: we will be ready to support measures to improve the Unemployment Insurance Act to take out the inequities, to make it a more effective system, but we will not support slashing and cutting the unemployment insurance system so people are not able to buy their food or to pay their rent when they are put out of work against their will.

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne)** Are there questions or comments?

• (1250)

**Mr. Charest:** Question or comment, Madam Speaker. I was interested in the Hon. Member's remarks about the notwithstanding clause, and I know that he has an interest in that issue. I was wondering whether he would like to comment on the fact that a well known Member of the Liberal Party, the federal Liberal caucus, the Member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart), has stated a very strong and unequivocal position on the notwithstanding clause? Could he explain for the House, Madam Speaker, what he thinks of the position taken by the Hon. Member for Laurier—Saint-Marie?

**Mr. Allmand:** Madam Speaker, I said that one can tolerate and one could tolerate people in the Conservative Party as well backbenchers who would take a different position from the Prime Minister and from the Government. That has always been accepted. You have had cases of that in both Parties. But within our parliamentary system it is not acceptable for a Minister of the Crown, one of the Privy Counsellors sitting in Cabinet with the Prime Minister, to take a different position from that of the Prime Minister on a critical issue such as this. So we can tolerate the fact that some of your backbenchers might disagree with the Prime Minister, and the fact that some people in our caucus disagree with the position stated by the Leader can be tolerated. We are not in government and we are not running the country through a cabinet system.

What cannot be accepted is when a government, meaning the Cabinet of this country, speaks with two voices on a most important issue. According to our system, either the Prime Minister fires the Minister in question, or the Minister, if he is honourable, resigns from the Cabinet because he cannot accept the policy of the Prime Minister.

In this case, that is not being done. Two different messages are being sent out to the country to please whatever group wishes to hear them.

**Mr. Riis:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I listened with interest to the Hon. Member's presentation and I found it to be, as usual, very thoughtful and indicating an understanding particularly of the regions of the country, and I know that the Hon. Member has travelled extensively and knows Canada well. I wonder if he would explain how he feels this Government has reacted in terms of really understanding and meeting the needs of the regions of Canada.