

our power to evaluate and set aside regulations and other statutory instruments. However, as long as we have our present constitutional power, as long as we have full constitutional responsibility for how that power is used, which we cannot evade, it seems to me that it is not only desirable but, indeed, our duty to provide mechanisms, such as those proposed by the committee, to assure that the legislative power we are delegating is used in a manner we regard as proper. I realize that Senator Tremblay regards himself as being restricted by a report which he signed, but I do not feel restricted by that report, and I suspect that most senators do not feel restricted by that report. Rather, what impresses us is the amount of delegation to the Governor in Council and to ministers which takes place and the need for the Senate to be mindful of the need to devise techniques by which to assure that that power is exercised in a proper and responsible way. The word "responsible" is the word I want to emphasize. The amendments that provide members of each house with opportunities to review and vote on the developmental plans and the regulations are intended to assure responsibility to Parliament.

[Translation]

Hon. L. Norbert Thériault: The work done by the Special Committee on Bill C-21 and my participation on it were one of the highlights of my time in the Senate.

Hon. Paul David: You are forgetting Bill C-22, Senator Thériault.

Senator Thériault: Honourable senators, I have tremendous respect for Senator Beaudoin's constitutional knowledge. I have tremendous respect for Senator Tremblay's knowledge of joint federal-provincial programs. I must tell you that, as for their knowledge of the problems of the unemployed, having listened carefully to them for several days, I am more and more convinced that it was never one of their priorities, because they are ignorant of it, or if they do know something, they did not show it by their participation in this debate.

[English]

Honourable senators understand that I have been in this place for ten years. I reluctantly take the position that the Senate should contravene the wish of the House of Commons. There comes a time when one who has served in this place for a period of time—one who was appointed, as all of us were, under the Constitution as it exists and one who knows quite well the powers of this place—must speak out. When he feels that the rights of the poor, of the downtrodden and of the handicapped are being trampled upon by a government, whether it be Conservative or Liberal, then that person, as an individual and as a member of this place, must stand up.

• (1620)

Many people who have appeared before the committee have told us that no other piece of legislation ever placed before the House of Commons or before the Senate by any government has been such a direct attack upon the poor and the poorer regions of this country. While I can understand with some trepidation the positions of Senators Beaudoin and Tremblay, I am anxiously awaiting the position and the participation in

[Senator Stewart.]

this debate of senators from Atlantic Canada. I hope, honourable senators, that we hear from Senator Simard, my colleague from New Brunswick, and from Senator Robertson. I hope that they will make good their positions as stated when the committee visited St. John's, Newfoundland, and Canso, Nova Scotia.

Senator MacEachen: Hear, hear!

Senator Thériault: One of the statements of Senator Simard and Senator Robertson warranted a headline. Honourable senators, I can understand that they have only been in this place for four or five years—they are still seeking headlines. The headline states: "Tory senator hints at changes to unemployment bill." All of us are anxiously awaiting the changes that Senator Simard and Senator Robertson will propose to this house.

Honourable senators, as I have said, Bill C-21 is a direct attack upon a system that has been in existence since 1941, when the Government of Canada sought an amendment to the Constitution so that we would have in place an unemployment insurance program. Why would the Government of Canada want the legal authority, the constitutional authority, for an unemployment insurance program? Why would the ten provinces cede their rights to such a program to the Government of Canada? The reason is that at that time the Government of Canada recognized the need for the protection of the workers and the unemployed of this country. I recall that as a young man in New Brunswick in 1956 and 1957 I happened to be chairman of an association known as the Commercial Fishermen Association of the Miramichi. We chased Minister Gregg, who was then the minister responsible for New Brunswick in the federal cabinet, to try to impress upon him the need for something to be done for the fishermen through the unemployment insurance program.

Honourable senators, since 1941 we have had Conservative governments. One served from 1957 to 1962 or 1963 under Mr. Diefenbaker. One served for a short period of time in 1979 or 1980 under Mr. Clark. But not one of those governments either touched, or let it be known that it had any intentions of doing anything with, the unemployment insurance program so as to affect the poorer people of our country.

I say to my colleagues from the Atlantic provinces; I say to my good friend Senator Rossiter, whose family I have known for a long time; I say to Senator Simard; I say to Senator Robertson, to Senator Doody and to every other senator, especially from Atlantic Canada and from Quebec, where there is an unemployment rate of 10 per cent: You should stand up to the Government of Canada, regardless of political stripe, and you should tell the Government of Canada: "I will not stand for the eroding of the acquired rights of the poor people—rights they have acquired since 1941."

I can honestly tell honourable senators that if I had had my way on this committee we would not at this moment be debating the amendments, because my recommendation would have been to kill that bill. And I believe that that is what we should have done. That is what we were told we should do.