

the information we have, we have a very tight law as Senator Hall said. We disqualify many, many of the applicants for benefits, much more than most states. Our benefit levels are much lower than most states. As a result, our employer contributions are far lower than most states. So our employers are enjoying a tremendous benefit from our state and we want to encourage that and continue that but certainly not at the expense of our unemployed. Those people ought to have at least a halfway decent benefit, somewhat reflective of their standard of living, even though it will be less than that. At least something they can live on until they find a job and I certainly would disagree that the benefit levels are so great that it encourages people to go on them. I think there may be some examples but I think far and away most people would rather not be on unemployment. It is far more to their advantage to be employed and have that higher wage. So I would support Senator Hall's amendment as proposed and oppose the Barrett amendment to it.

**SPEAKER NICHOL:** Thank you. Senator Higgins, did you wish to speak on the Barrett amendment?

**SENATOR HIGGINS:** Yes, Mr. President, thank you. In my file I have one letter against increasing unemployment rates. That is from the Associated General Contractors. I don't blame them because you probably, those of you who were here a couple of years ago, remember that Senator Goodrich and I were the only two that stood up and said it was unfair to raise their rates so high because we had a bill there that said the more people you lay off, the more frequently you do, the higher the rate you pay. Well, obviously, those in the construction industry are hit the hardest because theirs is seasonal business. I have also in my file a number of letters from unions asking me to support this bill. I received the same donation in my campaign for reelection from the Association of General Contractors as I did the unions. So my decision can't be based upon who helped Marge Higgins. In fact the first year I ran, the unions vehemently opposed me. But I think there comes a time when we have to look at what is fair, what is right, and in the years that I was in the insurance business, it used to kill me when I'd have to write and tell people that their workmen's comp went up because the Legislature had raised workmen's comp. Here we are talking about unemployment compensation. In 1981, there was a bill...Mr. Chairman,