

Government Orders

Brown heading up our CEIC office in Bridgewater who is now working to put together very effective industrial adjustment service programs which benefit our people. I deem it an honour and a privilege to work with people like Jim Brown. The result is to the benefit of the people in our area.

Second, I want to say that I am very pleased that this bill recognizes the unique situation of fishermen and preserves fishermen's benefits as they exist. I think that quite often people do not understand why fishermen are treated differently. Fishermen are the only self-employed individuals who participate in the unemployment insurance plan. It is because their resource is managed directly by government. It is the only resource that is, and fishermen find themselves from time to time having the fishery closed. They are not allowed to go to work as a direct result of a government decision. As a consequence since 1957 government has recognized this and fishermen have been participants within the plan.

People have often asked: "Why can't plant workers be a part of that as well?" After all, the employment opportunities of plant workers are directly related to whether or not the fishery is in operation. Of course, plant workers are employees; they are not self-employed. Therefore to open the door of opportunity to plant workers not to participate in the plan in the same way as all other employed workers in Canada would be inconsistent with the unemployment insurance system. Under Section 15(1) of the Charter it would open the door for all employed Canadians to want to be participants in the same way. Fishermen are in a unique circumstance and have to be recognized in that way.

Plant workers and other seasonal workers in the South Shore will also benefit from this bill. There is some concern that the increased entrance requirements may negatively impact people working in the fishing industry. This will not be the case in the South Shore because given the unemployment rates in our area there will be an increased entrance requirement of six weeks throughout the area.

The repeater clause is being removed. For members who may not be aware of it the repeater clause states that if you have drawn in the last year you have a penalty of six weeks applied to you should you wish to enter another claim. In fact we end up with a circumstance whereby although the entrance requirement is increased by six weeks, the six weeks is then taken away again by

the removal of the repeater clause that would have put an additional six weeks in. The net result ends up being the same.

We will also benefit from the announcement the minister made last Friday with respect to the \$3 million being made available under the job creation fund to assist Atlantic Canadians who are being impacted by the current fisheries downturn. In Nova Scotia, \$400,000 of that fund is being targeted for our province.

Indeed should plant workers in our area find that they are caught by the downturn, those funds will be made available as they have in previous years in Newfoundland and New Brunswick. We very much welcome that announcement and thank the minister for it. I am sure that should those funds not prove to be satisfactory we can again look to the minister to recognize our need, as she has done so well to date.

In conclusion, I would just like to say that I think Bill C-21 is a long overdue step in the right direction of overhauling our unemployment insurance. I think all Canadians will ultimately benefit, particularly if we look at the change within the context of other excellent work being done by the government in terms of the growth of our economy and fiscal restraint. I believe Canadians will benefit. I believe Nova Scotians will benefit. I encourage all members of the House to support this excellent measure.

Mr. Doug Fee (Red Deer): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to add my comments to the debate on Bill C-21. This bill has demanded an awful lot of attention and an awful lot of time by members in this House and by various groups and individual Canadians across the country.

Our committee travelled across Canada visiting all 10 provinces, listening to groups and to individual Canadians. The input we received was good. As has been pointed out, it was not always complimentary to the government and not all people agreed with us.

Something that I felt was very, very positive was the input by members opposite, members of our committee and the groups that did make presentations. I felt that all of us on the committee benefited. We all learned. We were all challenged to think about our positions, and I think we all came out of it richer for the experience. There was a common element in every presentation we received in all of the debate. All presenters wanted the same thing. They wanted what is best for the Canadian people. We perhaps disagree as to how we can best