

and Carleton-Charlotte. We cannot have people in neighbouring communities, whether it be in Westmorland-Kent, York-Sunbury, or Carleton-Charlotte, having ineligibility forced upon them, not by the employment within their own community but by the level of employment in the city of Fredericton or the city of Saint John.

That is the position in which I find myself as the member for Carleton-Charlotte. I put it to the minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, to take a look at it. Let us be a little more mobile than we have been, a little more susceptible to the needs of Canadians than the minister has shown himself to be when he turned down the Canadian Association for the Mentally Retarded when they asked for a grant under Young Canada Works.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lyle S. Kristiansen (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin my remarks this evening by touching on a few areas that have been of some concern to me and to many of the people with whom I have worked for some time.

We oppose the bill, largely because of what we find to be an increasing inequity in terms of the payment of the cost of this very important and vital program. But later on in my remarks I want to deal with that issue a little more because what we have is a program in which the people who have the least end up paying the most to get less benefits than do others. That seems to us to turn the tables completely on what any social service or social insurance program should attempt to do.

One of the things I want to mention this evening has to do with some of the administrative and regulatory decisions which take place from time to time under the act. The first item is something with which we began to run into trouble one or two years ago. We used to have the practice, in many industrial operations, that when there was a lay-off, arrangements would be made within that plant so that the senior person could choose to take that lay-off and allow the junior employee to continue working. I think that to many people, at least in the labour force, it is a good thing to have happen, for a variety of reasons, including perhaps some economic savings to the program itself.

Why should it matter to the government who is laid off? If a company with 400 employees is going to lay off 200, why should it necessarily be the junior people, so far as the government is concerned, who have to go on unemployment insurance? Very often what happens is that you find employees who are 50, 60 and 65 years of age, old-timers in the lumber industry who have been around since the days when they were pushing lumber onto carts pulled by horses, working at the hardest and toughest jobs in those operations, and young people who would be much happier to continue working because many of them have recently come into the labour force.

Surely it is in our interest to let young people who are moving into the labour force have the best experience possible and find that they can work continuously and build up some experience and realize what it is to work. Goodness knows,

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there is enough complaining about young people who are not turned on to the work ethic nowadays. So we should make some provision and show some flexibility to allow those who are young and most able to work to continue working, while the older, more experienced workers are allowed, if they so choose, to take the place of the younger employees and go on unemployment insurance.

It also fits one of the other social goals about which we spoke, that as people approach their retirement age they should be allowed time to get used to it, to phase it in. Why not, when it is not an increased cost to the program or to the taxpayer, allow those older employees to take that opportunity? But for some unforeseen reason, the bureaucracy within the commission within the past year or two has started to become very rigid. We are at a loss to understand why. If the commission is concerned with having those who are unemployed getting other jobs, those with seniority very often have more skills and more abilities, can be placed more easily than those who have just entered the labour force who are very often unskilled workers. It seems self-defeating as well as socially unjust to force that kind of change.

Another area on which I wanted to touch has to do with job search requirements which vary in a regulatory way or for administrative reasons from place to place. In order that someone who is unemployed can continue to collect his benefits, job search requirements are enforced too often when unemployment is too high and at unrealistic levels to expect much success to come from those sometimes very thorough job searches, especially during short duration unemployment when it is very often unreasonable to expect anyone, for some of the reasons that have been suggested earlier, to accept the short-term work when they might find their benefits cut off from time to time.

Suggestions keep coming forward that signed notes from prospective employers be obtained. In my view, they are rather stupid and unrealistic suggestions. We had an experience in Trail, B.C., about a year and a half ago where we had to take some action to prove, both to the local business community and to the Unemployment Insurance Commission, that it was not realistic. We took steps to make sure that pressure came forth from the people, particularly in that small business community, to tell the government and the commission to quit.

What happened was nothing out of the ordinary. The same people who were going around from employer to employer, drawing up their lists of calls for jobs, were doing it as before but they began doing it together. They drove the people in that business community bonkers in the middle of the business day when 30 people at the same time converged and insisted on applying for a job and obtaining a written note. It really seems rather silly and degrading for adults to be forced to do that sort of thing rather than to do what they used to be able to do, simply draw up a list after making their phone calls. In rural areas it often does not make economic sense for somebody without a job to go from place to place getting a handwritten note from a prospective employer saying "He has been here and he asked for a job but I did not have one to give him." But