

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

• (2150)

We were talking about regions and the Minister was aware of the problems we had in the regions, as defined for the unemployment insurance program. Here I want to talk about rural regions and urban regions because we are affected in our area.

In the Beauséjour region, the unemployment rate is between 15 and 30 per cent in the rural part. But in the neighboring city, Moncton, the unemployment rate is steady at around 8 per cent. When the urban and rural rates are combined, we get 11, 11.4, 11.5, which means that according to the law, we must have worked 16 weeks.

Last June, the Minister assured us that she was reviewing the whole matter, because she realized that combining urban and rural areas could cause problems in some regions.

I asked several times and always got the same answer: the matter was under review. When the Minister announced the unemployment insurance program, she also said that a study was being done and should be completed by January 1990, when the changes to the unemployment insurance program would take effect. But we read in the newspapers recently: U.I. Boundary System may miss deadline.

Once again, people are disappointed. They are promised changes that will benefit them, but the studies are not done and there is foot-dragging. However, the Government cannot say that it was not aware that such a problem or problems existed. People had been promised that the necessary changes would be made, because for us, the difference between 10 and 16 weeks and between 10 and 14 weeks, as this Bill proposes, is a major problem. Why? For the simple reason that we depend greatly on fishing. And where we live, fishing is seasonal. The lobster season in my part of the country is only 10 weeks. There is no question of making the season longer, because if the season were extended, it would be disastrous for lobster stocks; the same thing is happening in the crab industry where this resource was used as the basis for income support programs. This resource was used to provide weeks of work. This year, there was no more crab. There had been overfishing. So the people

working in the factories were not even able to work their 10 weeks.

All this to tell you that where we live, fishing is very, very seasonal. Of course, if the fishermen can only fish for 10 weeks, the factory workers are also limited to 10 weeks, not in all cases, but in many cases.

So this change from 10 to 14 weeks as proposed in this Bill is a major change that threatens some families and the stability of their income.

Of course, maybe only one person in the family will be affected, but in our area, as here and in many families, both parents have to work to "make ends meet".

And if one of the two can't qualify for unemployment insurance, they will have to live on one income because it also means you can't qualify for welfare benefits either. Which means that the family's income will be cut in two, when their income was already stretched to the limit, so we can't ask these people to make do with less money. People would rather work!

The proposed legislation is supposed to enable the Government to put a lot more emphasis on training. That is fine with us. If you are unemployed and you qualify for an unemployment insurance program or a training program, this is as good as a winning ticket and in fact they should literally offer you a ticket so you can move to a more prosperous part of this country.

Why? Because, Mr. Speaker, you can have all kinds of training programs, but if you can't get a job after all that training, you are back to square one.

In fact, one of the shortcomings of this program and all these changes is that there is no full employment strategy. But what did they do? Instead of giving us job opportunities, they went and cut the programs that could have helped us create jobs.

Earlier, I mentioned ACOA, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, which the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) had promised \$1 billion over five years. And now we find it isn't five but seven years. The money for development agreements and sub-agreements on fisheries, forestry, tourism— Today I heard that the sub-agreements on tourism won't even be renewed and that the amounts earmarked for these sub-agreements will now come out of ACOA funds.