

Employment and Immigration

they could learn the difference between fact and fiction. We have had the two greatest fiction writers in this House talking here all day, Mr. Speaker. Not only do they take credit for amendments to this bill with which they had nothing to do, but they take it upon themselves to try to discredit other members of the House for not attending committees of which they are not members. That, Mr. Speaker, from a party whose members are almost always consistently absent from this chamber. If it were not for their own House leader, on more days than not they would not even be represented in this chamber.

When Bill C-27 was introduced—and I admit without reservation that it was an attempt on the part of the minister to reduce the cases of abuse in our unemployment system—there were some members on this side of the House as well as the self-righteous socialists yonder who found the bill unacceptable. I must say that there were some members of the official opposition, too, who found the bill unacceptable. It was through the efforts, primarily of the members of the Atlantic Liberal caucus, that the substantive amendments to this bill were brought about. I say that because over a fairly lengthy period we met with the minister, who showed an extreme willingness to consult and co-operate with us, learning from us what the difficulties would be when this bill is passed.

Mr. Rodriguez: Did you see it before it was introduced?

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): What is the matter over there? Can't you take the truth? Just sit down and listen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order. The parliamentary secretary will please address the Chair. The parliamentary secretary has the floor for the purpose of making a speech, and I suggest we all listen.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope the members of the NDP will take that advice; they may become more enlightened. It was my colleague, the hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Breau), who brought about many of the amendments which are present in this bill today and which we now find acceptable in Atlantic Canada.

● (1620)

The hon. member for Yorkton-Melville is correct when he says there is a high rate of unemployment in my constituency. There is also a concerted effort by this government to overcome that situation. Hon. members opposite consistently find it convenient to ignore the job-creation programs of this government, to ignore the vast increase there has been in the number of people entering the labour force in this country, and to forget that the number of jobs being created on an annual basis is increasing every year and has increased substantially in this decade over the previous decade. Facts do not mean that much to them; they are more interested in fiction.

There is an important principle enunciated in this bill. The principle was given some force in the budget. It is the principle that in this country not all regions experience the same kind of economic opportunity. The budget and this bill proceed to deal with that disparity in economic opportunity. That is why there has been a differentiation of the qualifying period for unemployment insurance benefits across the country. The New Democratic Party would like to treat unemployment insurance as insurance to remain unemployed. It should be insurance against loss of employment income, and that is what the minister is trying to make it. They profess to be the experts on Atlantic Canada, but they should look at the success of their party over the years in that part of the country. This morning the hon. member for Nickel Belt consistently referred to Atlantic Canada and Newfoundland. He knows so little about us that he does not even know Newfoundland is part of Atlantic Canada.

Mr. Rodriguez: We know about golf courses in Newfoundland.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): You probably know about golf courses everywhere, because that is where you spend your time. You certainly do not spend your time here. The ten week qualifying period can be lived with.

Mr. Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The hon. member who has the floor made comments concerning me spending my time on golf courses. I have played golf once in my life. It was nine holes. I lost four balls and it took me 186 strokes to finish the course. He is not right when he says that I spend my time there. I spend my time in the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration trying to filibuster a bill on unemployment insurance which is rotten, terrible and atrocious for the unemployed people in this country. I should like to suggest that that is where he ought to be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order. I should suggest to the hon. member that that is not a point of order; it is a point of debate.

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Mr. Speaker, we now know the hon. member for Nickel Belt has played at least one more game of golf than I have, and we also know what is wrong with him.

We can now live with the qualifying periods set out in Bill C-27. Through consultation with the minister and his officials, and primarily through the efforts of the minister, we have brought about sufficient changes in both the qualifying and the benefit structure periods of this bill in order that those of us who represent economically distressed areas of Atlantic Canada will have no difficulty living with it. It will go a long way toward bringing attention to the fact that in this country there are varying levels of economic opportunity. Those with lesser economic opportunity deserve special consideration from the government of Canada. It would also help if some of the provincial governments would turn some of their attention to the areas of economic distress in their own provinces.