

a way of life, or who want to change the system to remove disincentives to work. This tactic is reminiscent of the way in which the war on poverty became the war on the poor in the 1960s. Today we witness the problem of unemployment becoming the problem of the unemployed. These arguments do nothing to address the problem of unemployment which stands officially, as of May, 1980, at 7.8 per cent, or 904,000 people unemployed. When we take a look at the hidden unemployed, the real jobless rate is somewhere in the area of 11.7 per cent, or 1,411,000 Canadians out of work.

A government committed to reducing unemployment in this country could quite easily set targets for lower rates, as was done in the United States with the Humphrey-Hawkins bill passed in October, 1978. This bill endeavoured to establish opportunity for work as a basic right and set a target of 4 per cent unemployment by 1983 in the United States. Instead of doing something like that, the Canadian government decided that full employment is now double the figure which the Economic Council set at 3 per cent in the 1960s. The Economic Council of Canada in "Two Cheers for the Eighties" set the equilibrium unemployment rate at 6 per cent. In economic terms this is the rate of unemployment that can be maintained without creating inflationary pressure in the labour market. From the point of view of policymaking, these rates are enormously important in so far as at least the government uses them as targets. In effect these rates determine the degree of government commitment to policies which encourage the growth of employment. Since the government is eliminating its vested interest in maintaining low levels of unemployment in this country, it appears that the government has simply thrown up its hands and no longer knows what to do.

During the 1980 election campaign, members of the NDP called for the introduction of a full employment bill which would set targets for reducing unemployment to 6 per cent by 1982 and to 4 per cent by 1984. It is important to note in this connection that for every one job created in producing a resource, another six jobs are created in processing it, and yet these are the same jobs we have been exporting from Canada for years.

● (1640)

Unemployment and the costs of unemployment now amount to something in the order of \$5 billion annually in lost production, goods and services. It costs us an additional \$1 billion a year in lost federal tax revenues, and it costs us a further \$5 billion per year in unemployment insurance pay-outs. It should also be pointed out that a Conference Board study in 1976 showed that for every 1 per cent drop in the rate of unemployment, unemployment insurance pay-outs would be reduced by some \$500 million annually.

In the press release in which the minister announced Bill C-3, he also announced the government's intention to right part of the wrong his government had inflicted on part-time workers under the unemployment insurance program when the government previously amended the Unemployment Insurance Act. According to this press release, the government intends to

### *Unemployment Insurance Act*

introduce regulating changes to be effective in January, 1981, which would change the minimum insurability requirements from 20 hours per week to 15 hours per week, or 20 per cent of maximum insurable earnings.

The minister in that press release cited this move as an improvement that would eliminate charges that the existing rule discriminates against women who make up 71 per cent of the part-time labour force. About 42,000 part-time workers lost their eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits in December, 1978, when Parliament passed legislation disqualifying those who work fewer than 20 hours a week.

According to the minister of manpower and immigration at that time the change was part of a package of cutbacks designed to reduce payments from the unemployment insurance funds, to the tune of \$1 billion annually. The estimated cost to part-time workers on an annual basis at that time was some \$60 million. The present Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy), who is also the minister responsible for the status of women, likes to put himself forward as the champion of women's rights, and somewhat of a liberal reformer in this area. From what I have seen of the minister's actions since I came into this House, there is certainly very little to justify those claims. In fact, for all the verbiage he has gone through, he is no better and no worse than his predecessors in that portfolio.

**An hon. Member:** He is no worse?

**Mr. Young:** He is about the same. The minister follows the Liberal tradition of giving close attention when listening to the problems of women, but the end result when it comes to doing anything is the traditional pat on the head, but nothing of substance ever comes forward.

Some 20 per cent of working women are employed on a part-time basis in Canada as compared to 6 per cent of men who work part-time. Most of these women work part-time, not because they want to, but simply because there are not enough full-time jobs available.

Not too long ago the Social Planning Council of metropolitan Toronto published a document entitled "The Problem Is Jobs . . . Not People". It was a response to proposed revisions in the Unemployment Insurance Act by the then government which was formed by the same party in government today.

**An hon. Member:** The problem is Liberals.

**Mr. Young:** Right. Even though the figures may have changed somewhat, and are probably worse today than they were even then, I think these figures are still worthy of some attention. The Social Planning Council document said at that time in Toronto alone there were nearly 15 job hunters for every job vacancy, and 45 per cent of those job hunters were women, yet only 36.8 per cent of unemployment insurance claimants in Toronto were female because women actually under-use the system and are hesitant to claim benefits even though those benefits are rightfully theirs.