

*Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971*

In every province in Canada, starting in September in the vocational schools, when one goes into a typical classroom, one will find that one out of three or half the number of people are drawing unemployment insurance, and the other two-thirds or one-half are not. That is determined by whether or not you are acquainted with the system well enough to be able to, prior to your lay-off, go into the unemployment insurance office and get what is commonly referred to as a manpower seat.

● (1230)

Therefore, I agree with what the hon. gentlemen put on the record a few moments ago about the absolute and total discrimination of the Unemployment Insurance Act. Imagine the outrage people feel that Members of Parliament from the three political Parties sit in this Chamber and deal with the Act and have dealt with it over the years, yet we and the Senate do not agree on changing the system to make everyone equal. In fact, to put it on the record, perhaps most Members of Parliament and most Senators do not even know it is going on anyway.

Also for the record, this Bill before us today will continue what is commonly referred to as the variable entrance requirement. If the Bill does not pass what would it mean? The Bill affects only repeaters. It does not affect new entrants, or re-entrants as some Members have said. It does not affect how much unemployment insurance you get or who gets it. Not at all. What it affects is how many insurable weeks you need if you are a repeater.

You know what a repeater is. A repeater is a person who draws unemployment insurance consistently over 52 weeks. He re-enters the workforce and then applies for unemployment insurance. The variable entrance requirement comes into play depending on where you are in Canada, if you are a repeater and only if you are a repeater, not if you are what is referred to in the outrageous Act passed by this Parliament in 1978 and the outrageous Act that was passed by this Parliament in 1977 as a new entrant or a re-entrant. That has nothing to do with this Act. You can throw it in the garbage. It has to do with repeaters.

The Hon. Member stood up a few moments ago and said, my goodness, I am from the Outaouais, I believe it was, and she said, "We are longing for this Bill". If your unemployment insurance rate is fairly low and you are shouting for people to get unemployment insurance, then you had better vote against this Bill. You see, if the Bill is not passed, no matter where you were in Canada you would require 14 weeks of insurable employment to collect unemployment insurance, not 20 weeks as it is in a great many areas in Canada, nor 18 weeks, or 17 weeks, or 16 weeks, or 15 weeks. You would require 14 weeks right from Cape Spear, Newfoundland over to British Columbia. If you threw the Bill in the garbage, certain areas

of Canada would benefit, if you were supporting people to get unemployment insurance with fewer weeks required. Everybody would be the same. However, for the areas where presently you need only 10 weeks, up to 14 weeks, they would be required to get 14 weeks to collect unemployment insurance. That is what the Bill does. It does not do anything else.

Back in 1977 and 1978, as the present occupant of the chair will recall, this Chamber changed the law. Prior to 1977, as you will recall, you needed only eight weeks to collect unemployment insurance right across Canada. A Bill came in that changed that. That was followed by another Bill in 1978, and that Bill brought in the most discriminatory legislation that I have ever seen in this Chamber. We have lived with it ever since. I say today that what exists in the law today is outright and total discrimination. That is, a re-entrant to the workforce requires by law twice as many insurable weeks as a repeater.

In other words, what you find is this. In seasonal industries in northern Québec, northern Ontario, northern British Columbia, the northern part of every province in Canada, in rural Canada, at a fish plant, for example, you will find on the working lines that a lady works maybe for three months, four months or five months of the year off and on during the summer. She gets maybe 15 weeks of insurable employment. When she is laid off, when she is no longer called back, she can collect unemployment insurance because she collected unemployment insurance the year before. However, next to her on the assembly line is another lady who, last year or the year before or the year previous to that, made the mistake of having a child. Then that lady is doomed forever never to qualify for unemployment insurance. Now, isn't that an outrageous thing to have in legislation?

**Mrs. Maily:** Yes.

**Mr. Baker:** It is there. I do not understand how Governments can come and go in this country and not correct that outright discrimination in the Unemployment Insurance Act. That lady who took a year out is now regarded by the law of Canada under the Act as a re-entrant into the workforce. Therefore, what does she require in Newfoundland? Twenty insurable weeks of employment within one year. You cannot space it out over two years.

The repeater with whom this Bill deals does not require 20 weeks by law passed by this Parliament. I suppose you could say that the same discrimination lies in our young people in Canada. They are not affected by this Bill either because they are what you call new entrants. New entrants are classified the same way as that lady who took one year out to have a child. They also require five months of insurable employment in order to be a new entrant as defined under the Act.