

mission Act. First reading of the Bill was on June 1 of this year. We in the New Democratic Party oppose this Bill and will oppose it with all that we have throughout this debate and for as long as we can. Of course tonight closure has been imposed and in just a few hours we will be voting on second reading of the Bill.

The Government has introduced what I believe to be two very important and negative pieces of legislation since I was elected on November 21. The first of those important and negative pieces of legislation was the Bill to implement the free trade deal. I remember standing in this House about nine o'clock on one of those evenings before Christmas speaking to a lot of Canadians who I know were not watching because of the time of day. Once again I find the same thing on a very important piece of legislation affecting a great number of people. I am standing here in the House late at night debating something that the people of Canada should be hearing during the normal course of the business day.

I am very happy to be talking about this Bill because there are a lot of things that I think need to be changed which are not addressed in this piece of legislation. I am a very active Member of Parliament. I have a lot of contact with my constituents. I deal with their cases on a very personal basis, be it unemployment insurance, immigration, visa matters or even social assistance cases. I am more than happy to sit down in my office and help them through their problems.

I have dealt with quite a few people who have difficulty with the unemployment insurance program. I have a lot of contact with the unemployment insurance offices in my riding, one in North Battleford and one in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. The people who work in those offices are very dedicated individuals working hard to administer a very difficult and flawed program. This legislation is going to make their job much more difficult, and it is going to make the people they are dealing with much more angry.

I have listened to quite a number of speeches tonight from government Members who have talked about the need to change the legislation because of the way in which the current system is being abused. I have heard Members on this side of the House correct Members on the other side of the House by indicating that the abuse

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rate of the unemployment insurance program is less than 1 per cent. I know from dealing with people in my office that the people who are having difficulty with the unemployment insurance program as it exists today are not abusing the program. They are in desperate need of the program, and they are in desperate need of improvements to the program.

I want to cite a particular case with which I am just finishing. It first came to my attention on April 27 of this year. A young woman in my riding had left her place of employment in early April. She had a very good reason for leaving her place of employment, but there was some difficulty in communicating that information to the people at the Canada Employment Centre who were administering the unemployment insurance program. To make matters very simple, it was a dispute with her employer.

On April 27, after a couple of weeks of receiving no satisfaction in dealing with the office and getting her claim settled, she finally achieved eligibility for benefits under the program but was disentitled in her first week of benefits because the workers at the unemployment insurance office questioned her about her child care arrangements in her family circumstances. She lives on a farm a few miles out of town and on one day she had difficulty getting a caregiver to look after her young infant when she had a job interview. Canada Employment disentitled her for benefits because, they said, she had inadequate child care arrangements. That was on April 27 when she came to see me.

After we investigated her claim and discussed it with the people at the Canada Employment Centre, she was put back on the benefit roll, but because of her disqualification she was penalized four weeks. Since she could not serve the disqualification at the same time as the disentitlement, she served the four weeks from April 28 and then had to serve another mandatory two-week waiting period, which has to be served by all UI claimants before the benefits would be paid.

If we add this up we find a young woman in an area where jobs are hard to find with a young child at home, unemployed, with no income at all for 10 weeks as a result of the problems with the existing program. She is back on benefits and she will get her first cheque on June 23. The Canada Employment Centre has recognized that