

Government Orders

scrapping it altogether. If it is determined to proceed with the bill, it should look at those points and try to amend the bill in a way so that its impact on people will be negligible.

For those who are interested, we are debating the UI bill which deals with the question of reduction of unemployment insurance payments from 60 per cent to 57 per cent effective April 1, 1993.

There is a second segment to the government proposal that deals with people who might quit their job without just cause. Those people will no longer qualify for UI benefits.

As my colleague from Newfoundland has indicated, it is extremely difficult at times to justify what is just cause. We are really going against the basic principles of our justice system that the accused is innocent until proven guilty. The government is reversing this principle when it comes to the unemployed. In other words you have to prove you are not guilty. You go before the board with the assumption that you are guilty and have to prove your innocence.

Perhaps we should look at the question of the board that will be looking at what is just cause and what is not just cause. In 1991 more than 191,000 cases came before the board. The board was able to deal with about 19,000 cases and was able to reverse those cases.

If the government is to proceed with Bill C-113, all we are going to see is a tremendous increase in the number of people who will be appealing their cases before the board trying to justify leaving their place of employment.

The government has been saying over and over again that it is taxpayers' money involved when it comes to the payment of premiums. That is not quite so. The government used to make contributions to the UI account until the year 1990. After that it became the responsibility of both the employee and the employer.

What will be the impact of this bill if it passes? The unemployed will not disappear from the face of the earth. However those hoping to collect unemployment insurance will have to go to another source for income. That is the social welfare system. By passing the UI bill the government is unloading or passing on the responsibility to another level of government, the municipal government.

• (1255)

The people we are talking about are supposedly the quitters. I am going to take one example from here in our city. We have an unemployment rate of approximately 30,000 people. Of those 30,000 people, approximately 6 per cent or 1,800 people have quit their jobs.

If this bill is passed does it mean that these people will not be eligible to collect UI benefits? The cost would be in excess of about \$30 million annually. That money would be taken away from our region. The result of this would be that more people will have to rely on the social assistance benefit. As well, when you add to that the reduction of the benefit from 60 per cent to 57 per cent then you will have an addition to the \$30 million of quite a few millions. All of that money has been taken away from the local tax base.

It has been the position of the Liberal Party and members of the opposition that the government has to address the heart of the problem which is the question of unemployment. Rather than attacking the unemployed, why do we not focus on employment and on measures to stimulate the economy so we will have more jobs?

The whole idea behind proper employment initiative programs is to promote labour flexibility and mobility. After all, it is unemployment insurance. It is an interim measure that has been put in place in order to help employees move from one job to another. It is only fair that such a measure is mobile and flexible. It has been put in place in order to meet the objectives.

I see we are getting close to one o'clock. I want to leave the House with one thought. Every time we deal with a situation in this House it always seems to be a question of reacting rather than a question of preventing something from happening.

Most of the bills that I have seen over the past four years have been reactive bills. One would suggest that they should have been preventive bills that would stimulate the economy and help reduce the unemployment rate or create jobs. This bill obviously is no different.

For the sake of 1 per cent of the work force that is quitting their jobs or abusing the system the government has put everybody in the same basket. We will not be supporting this bill. It is my hope that the government will review its decision in light of all the comments and recommendations that were made by our caucus and by the community as a whole.