

cannot fathom the reasoning behind these amendments which on the face of it are based on the assumption that jobs are available but people are not looking for them. In this country today one million are unemployed. If you include those not included in our official statistics, the figure is closer to 1.5 million. And how many job vacancies do we have in this country? According to the last figures, about 58,000. Therefore, we have one million unemployed and not quite 60,000 job vacancies.

More often than not, existing job vacancies are not available in the areas of highest unemployment. Consequently, the man who lives in Newfoundland, say, is told that because no jobs are available in Newfoundland he should move to Toronto or some other area where jobs are available. The Department of Manpower provides a mobility grant for helping people to move. When you ask a man to move, you ask him to make an onerous decision. He must decide, if he cannot find a job in Newfoundland and does not want to be disqualified from unemployment insurance benefits, to uproot his family, sell his house, if he has one, and move to Toronto or some other large centre for a job for which he may be qualified.

Let us say he does that. What could happen to him? Sure, he can find a job in Toronto or some large centre where there are more opportunities for employment. It could last a few months. The ebb and flow of the economic cycle creates fluctuations in employment levels even in our major centres, and the man who moves may find that because he was the last to join the plant or firm, he is the first to be laid off. He has given up his house in Newfoundland, probably mortgaged himself to the hilt to acquire accommodation in Toronto, and after working a few months finds himself laid off. I say this by way of illustrating that it is totally impractical to suggest that because there are some 60,000 job vacancies in Canada people should move from one end of the country to the other to fill them. The risks are too great.

The majority of people on unemployment insurance do not have long job experience, job skills or a high level of education. Many of them do seasonal work or unskilled work. Their ability to compete on the labour market is severely restricted. Even if they have the wherewithal to move to areas with job vacancies, because they are inadequately educated and trained the cards are stacked against them when they try to compete for jobs. The minister's proposal for tightening the unemployment insurance scheme, his proposal for reducing the benefits paid, will not, I predict, lead in any measurable way to the filling of existing job vacancies in this country. If we could by some magic fill the 60,000-odd job vacancies, we would still be left with more than one million unemployed. Surely, the minister's approach is wrong.

No doubt the minister will argue that if we cut back the number who qualify for unemployment insurance, we will release money for job-creation programs and for training the unemployed in skills which will enable them to find jobs. There is no logic to that argument. The amendments we are considering will deprive at least 100,000 unemployed of between one and 12 weeks of benefits, and the minister calls this a saving.

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In other words, the money which will not be paid to the unemployed will be used to create jobs for those same unemployed and many hundred thousand other unemployed. That is muddled thinking. We cannot save money by taking it out of unemployment insurance and using it for some kind of job training program.

I suggest there will be little relationship between the amount of money saved and the job training programs the government will bring forward. Indeed, one wonders what will happen to those individuals who will no longer be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. What would have happened if some of this bill's provisions had been implemented last year? If some 300,000 people had been cut off unemployment insurance benefits, the government would have saved probably between \$150,000 and \$250,000. In other words, it would have deprived the unemployed of around \$200,000 in benefits and used the money paid to create jobs for other unemployed. It is like taking one step forward and two back.

It is nothing but a lot of administrative gobbledygook which will not solve the problem, but which makes it look as if the government is doing something constructive. In other words, the government is reacting to the arguments of editorial writers and others who perpetuate the myth that there are hundreds of thousands of jobs out there if only the people would take them, and that the unemployment insurance scheme stops people taking those jobs or discourages them from working. The reality is the opposite; cutting more people off unemployment insurance will be a false saving. It will not work. There is something else I have to keep repeating. The minister will not argue the point; I do not think he has an argument. However, it is important that it be on the record and that the public understand.

● (1240)

The minister has been advancing the phony argument that the reason behind these amendments is that those who will be disqualified will be mostly young people and women who are not serious job-seekers. They are only there to gain a supplemental income; they can still rely on the head of the family to keep body and soul together; their kind of work is not that essential to the economy, and therefore if they become unemployed they should not be allowed to collect unemployment insurance. Let us again look at the statistics. I use the government's own sources. In June last year, a month when many students were on the job market looking for jobs, and unemployed in large numbers, we find that only 12.5 per cent of unemployment insurance recipients were young people under 20 years of age.

The myth that somehow the large proportion of unemployment insurance benefits is going to youngsters who are not really serious about working for any length of time, merely wanting to work a bit to qualify for unemployment insurance benefits and representing a huge percentage of the drain on the unemployment insurance fund, is false. The other argument the minister keeps making is that a great proportion of recipients are women who really do not need the second job