

Unemployment Insurance Act

As I have indicated, the number of available jobs is limited to probably not more than one job for every 15 to 20 people unemployed. By forcing people who are receiving benefits out of the system we are not going to force them into other jobs. If every job vacancy was filled we would still have in the neighbourhood of 850,000 unemployed. That is a fact the minister stubbornly refuses to face.

We must consider who will be adversely affected by this measure. If we look at the facts we will discover it is not the ordinary citizen who has been brainwashed by the media of this country, and fooled by the kind of trick questions asked by those trained seals the minister hired to do this so-called survey, who will be affected. We will find it is precisely the poorest people in the country who live in slow-growth areas who will be adversely affected.

Let me refer the minister to a letter from a member of the legislature of Manitoba, the hon. member representing the provincial constituency of Churchill. That is an area in which a very large percentage—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): I regret to inform the hon. member that his allotted time has expired.

Mr. Elmer M. MacKay (Central Nova): Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting debate because we have people sitting across there like the minister who has been desperately trying to extricate himself from one of the biggest examples of foot and mouth disease this House has seen for a long time as a result of his intemperate and untimely remarks in committee.

An hon. Member: You're full of bugs.

Mr. MacKay: I can tell you about bugs, if you like. There are more bugs in this bill, and in the head of a minister who would make a statement like he did in committee, than one could find anywhere else outside a Dutch elm farm, I would suggest. The simple fact is that those people opposite have got themselves in a bit of a box. These are the hon. gentlemen who, over the years, have prided themselves on being the guardians of the social conscience of the nation. I remember when the present chairman of Air Canada, recently appointed, extolled the virtues of income redistribution, and assured all and sundry that this was a great thing, and that the situation was going to be all right just as long as these people had the opportunity to talk about unemployment insurance and bring in their big ideas of what was going on in admiration of it.

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Members in my party and in the New Democratic Party pointed out at that time what would happen. In fact the whole history of unemployment insurance difficulty in this country can be traced back to when the government started to manipulate the situation that was to be found when we had a national employment service. Anyone who would care to go back over the history of the parliamentary debates and to examine what occurred, would see that some years ago when Tom Kent, the exalted gentleman who is looking after Sydney Steel and who was previously appointed to look after Devco, in the name of a

[Mr. Orlikow.]

national manpower strategy and other such misguided attempts to change the social fabric of the country, brought in, the forerunner to the present Unemployment Insurance Act.

There was a time in this country when employment and unemployment matters were in the control of the local office, and the local officials knew who needed work and who needed benefits. All of that was changed in the name of a national manpower strategy. In the aftermath of having this program computerized and dehumanized, there has been such gross administrative incompetence over the years that probably hundreds of millions of dollars have been wasted, dollars which could have been applied to permanent job creation programs.

We have reached the stage now, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) has said, where \$4 billion is paid out in this country in such a way that it is a tremendous drain on the economy, simply because the government has manifestly failed to do anything constructive in the way of giving Canadians who want jobs an opportunity of full employment and to do something to help their country in the process.

When the minister is made to face his failure, he talks about people in the most disadvantaged areas of the country in terms of saying that he does not want to spoon-feed them or, as he says, "put a nipple in the mouths of those young-people of the country the way the New Democratic Party would do". Another comment he has made is, "sit at home and wait for the unemployment insurance just to pour in." I do not always agree with some of the theories of my friends to the left, but certainly there was no suggestion by anyone in that party or by any other members in this House that people in any part of Canada were exhibiting an attitude like that. I think that it shows the attitude of this government and the attitude of the minister, that he would blow his cool, make a statement like that and, in so doing, harden and exacerbate the attitudes in this House and, indeed, in the country, and create this kind of environment where people have to sit back and take those kinds of gratuitous insults.

What is the outlook for people in the slow growth areas of this country, particularly in view of the energy crisis and the increasing costs which people will face in provinces like my own, Prince Edward Island, and in many other areas of the country? There are absolutely no real prospects for industrial growth and, therefore, regional development, as long as this kind of economic condition exists. Yet this is the time when the government chooses to bring in legislation to make it basically impossible for people who do not have jobs to survive without either going on welfare or some sort of relief, which is provided not by the federal government but by the municipalities or the provincial governments.

It is very easy to see, if the government cared to listen to some of the statements put forward by spokesmen for the provinces, that there is no way that the economies of some of the Atlantic provinces can withstand this additional burden. The submission by the Hon. Leslie I. Hull, the minister of social services for New Brunswick, sets this out very graphically. He says: