

I think someone, sometime, should sit down with a couple of sensible people and rewrite the Unemployment Insurance Act so it is not so silly and so discriminatory and so that it does what it is supposed to do. In this way the Government would not spend all of its time trying to take people off unemployment insurance. The Government tries to show us a picture by pointing to the Auditor General's Report and saying, "Look at the overpayments to people".

• (1150)

Anyone who has dealt with unemployment insurance problems in the nation knows that the overpayments are as a result of departmental mistakes and corrections. An overpayment results when the Unemployment Insurance Commission overpays someone. An overpayment results when the Unemployment Insurance Commission says, "We found out you helped somebody fix their kitchen two weeks ago so we do not think that you should have been on unemployment insurance two weeks ago". That is an overpayment. Those cases are now piling up before the appeal committees and the Federal Court.

We will soon need to have a whole new group of judges to hear these cases just because of the sheer number of appeals that are underway in the high unemployment areas of the country. It is unfortunate that the Government does not act, sit down with people who have been on unemployment insurance and read the judgments of the Federal Court which hears the appeals. These federal judges were once known as umpires.

One can walk into one of those courtrooms on any day and hear the federal judge read his judgment. There are thousands of CUBs, which are the judgments of the federal judges. Very often the judge points out that there is something wrong with the Unemployment Insurance Act or with the Minister of National Revenue (Mr. MacKay) who interprets the Act.

Why is the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard) bringing in this Bill? I do not know. He is not responsible for what is in the Act. He does not make a judgment on what is in the Act. The Minister of Employment and Immigration has no more to do with the Act than does the Minister of Transport (Mr. Crosbie). So why is he bringing it in?

The Minister of National Revenue determines those sections of the Unemployment Insurance Act which deal with eligibility and determination of employment. It is he who determines whether or not someone qualifies for unemployment insurance benefits. He decides whether or not they have the required number of weeks. When one appeals a ruling against a determination of one's eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits that appeal is made to the Minister of National Revenue.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat. As the previous speaker said, I will vote for this legislation simply because one has to support it. In one respect—one small respect—it continues a system which recognizes that the high unemployment areas have particular problems. However, at

the same time, I wish to put on the record how foolish is the Unemployment Insurance Act.

**Mr. Allmand:** Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Gander—Twillingate (Mr. Baker) has referred to some serious failings in the Unemployment Insurance Act, as well as some weaknesses in it. He said in his remarks that someone should sit down to write a new Act in order to correct these matters. Does he realize that the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration spent more than six months doing exactly what he suggested? It drafted a report in which it recommended many of the changes to which the Hon. Member has referred. It was a unanimous report. It was given to the Government and not one of the recommendations was accepted.

For example, the committee recommended that if one was unemployed and collecting unemployment insurance benefits then one should be allowed to take courses in a training school, university, or whatever in order to upgrade one's qualifications. The Government rejected that recommendation. One of the recommendations dealt with these so-called overpayments and the fact that they are often made by bureaucrats and officials. The committee made 90 recommendations to bring up to date the Unemployment Insurance Act in these various areas. They were rejected totally and completely. The Hon. Member has made his plea today. I do not know what else we can do.

**Mr. Baker:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman is absolutely correct. He referred to people who are going to a trade school or who are in the process of upgrading themselves. These people are sitting at home saying to themselves, "My goodness, I would love to do a course. I want to go to better myself so that perhaps I can get another job. I need those qualifications to get another job". They go to a training school and are cut off from unemployment insurance benefits. The committee recommended that because these people are retraining they should be allowed to collect unemployment insurance benefits.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, certain people are able to do that today. In trade schools anywhere in Canada one finds that half the students are collecting unemployment insurance benefits while the other half is not. Why? Because the one half which is collecting unemployment insurance benefits are in Manpower seats.

I will have to explain what a Manpower seat is. Only someone collecting unemployment insurance who goes through the system knows what a Manpower seat is. It is a seat that is paid for by the Department of Employment and Immigration, but we call it a Manpower seat in our jargon. There are only so many seats which are paid for by the Department and there is a trick to getting one. When one goes to apply for unemployment insurance one must register for a seat. The recommendation of the standing committee in this area was one of the planks in the platform built by the Conservative Party when it ran for election. It was one of those glorious planks that even I looked at and said, "My goodness, they have some sense.