

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

lobster in winter, nor will tourists visit our beautiful province in the middle of winter.

The Government's proposal to increase the number of weeks needed to work to be eligible is based on the assumption that the work is available. In some regions of Canada and in some industries, this is correct. But it is not correct in Atlantic Canada. The Government believes that the work is out there but people do not want to work. That is also not very often the case.

With respect to P.E.I.'s industries, as previously mentioned, we have a short tourist season. Where are these Canadians supposed to get the number of weeks required if their employers can only operate in a ten-week season? Can the federal Government actually expect these businesses to stay open after the end of the tourist season so employees can get the required number of weeks to qualify? I doubt that they would, especially after having paid into the program at an increased cost. To Atlantic Canadians, the proposed changes will be devastating and the proposed programs to replace the reductions of benefits are equally devastating because the whole thrust of the Canadian Jobs Strategy is to involve the private sector in training, and the training is geared toward a growth economy that is providing short-term jobs for a large number of private sector employers and a significant number of skill shortage occupations.

Mr. Speaker, this does not describe Atlantic Canada's economy, and certainly not that of my own province. As I have explained, P.E.I. has a unique economy and the present unemployment insurance program recognizes this. P.E.I. and the rest of Atlantic Canada have many strengths, but they also have many weaknesses which the present system addresses. I am quite sure that all Canadians would agree that they do not wish to have to rely on unemployment insurance. But given the disparities within our country, unemployment insurance has become an inherent need and is most certainly not abused by Canadians.

It was stated here earlier that in 1987-88 only 0.2 per cent of all UI claimants were charged with cheating. That is 5,507 claimants out of a total of 2.4 million.

Canadians have reason to be proud of their social programs. While I know there is a spirit of fair-minded-

ness, tolerance and compassion among all Canadians, I believe the Government is turning its back on the needs of many Canadians. If that agenda proceeds unchallenged or unquestioned, I believe it will lead to a steady erosion of the kind of Canada which provides security and opportunity for all its citizens.

The federal Government will somehow realize that its policies threaten to undermine the economies of the have-not regions of this country. The Government has a duty and a commitment to protect and promote economic development and social justice throughout all areas of this country. It has a responsibility to the poor, the elderly and the disadvantaged. Since 1940 we have seen changes to the Unemployment Insurance Act, changes aimed at improving assistance for workers and employers. We in the Liberal Party initiated many of these changes but we will not support such drastic measures aimed at increasing the difficulties of unemployed Canadians.

**Mr. Thompson:** We want to put Canadians back to work. We don't want to keep them on welfare.

**Mr. Proud:** I join my Liberal colleagues in calling for the Government to withdraw this Bill, to listen to the average Canadian citizen and come back to the House for the last Draconian piece of legislation.

**Mr. Crawford:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Hon. Member several questions, mostly for clarification. I feel I am qualified. I still have callouses on my hands. Statements were made earlier by the Hon. Member from Burlington (Mr. Kempling) on unemployment insurance. In my riding unemployment insurance has been cut back. The number of days one must work has been raised. When a person cannot collect unemployment insurance he goes on welfare. Being a past warden of my riding, I know the welfare costs are directly on the people.

Let me speak about the benefits of retraining. I certainly believe in retraining programs. Unfortunately, in my riding the retraining programs have been cut back. They have been cut back and the people who suffer are those that the Hon. Member referred to, such as single parents. St. Clair College had its retraining programs cut back. What about the number of jobs available?

I believe the Hon. Member mentioned quality control. I was Chief Inspector for a company on quality control.