

Unemployment Insurance Act

rate is between 11 per cent and 12 per cent. How absolutely scandalous. Instead of facilitating an easy transition back into the workforce, the Tories are going to penalize you if you do not take the first employment opportunity that comes your way. It does not matter if you are a skilled professional, the Conservative Party would rather see you flipping hamburgers than looking that little bit extra longer for work that will lead you to a career in which you will be best able to contribute to Canadian society.

When is this Government going to create those jobs that will help sustain families at a decent level, instead of perpetuating their misfortune and increasing the number of working poor?

[Translation]

Now see how Bill C-21 will affect Québec. Under the present system, Québecers paid \$2.5 billion in premiums and collected \$3.3 billion. Obviously, on looking at these figures, we must revise and improve this program. By withdrawing from the unemployment insurance program, the Government is forcing employers with a large labour force to make up the difference.

In Québec, this will mean \$100 million more will have to be spent by the Government, given the large number of employed workers.

Mr. Speaker, again, taxpayers, particularly those in Québec, will pay the bill for the lack of federal financial assistance in this area. All employers in Québec will have to pay more, to compensate for the measures in the Bill.

[English]

No matter which way we look at it this is a bad government policy. By shortening the number of weeks for benefits and increasing the necessary time for people to qualify, the Conservatives are offering Canadians more options.

When benefits are cut and the person is still unemployed, he or she will either have to go on provincially funded welfare programs or join the increasing number of Canadians who must rely on bread lines and soup

kitchens for food and shelter. Unfortunately, that is going to be the legacy of the Conservative Government.

I know that Members opposite are going to claim that I am against job training programs. Nothing could be further from the truth. Liberals are not opposed to job training. In fact, from 1984 to 1989 the Tories have cut the funds for training programs from \$2.2 billion to \$1.5 billion. It is only now that they have taken from the funds designed to pay for the necessities of life that the training spending is back to its original level. As a concerned citizen I find this option most regrettable.

In an interview the Minister for International Trade said last October that the Government had no intention of cutting the unemployment insurance system. He even told the press that the Prime Minister was in full agreement with this position. I would like to know from the Hon. Minister what has changed between then and now to prompt such a devastating attack on our social programs.

It is obvious that the Conservatives have broken yet another of their election commitments. Might I add that Canadians will not forgive them again. The people of this country are tired of listening to the empty rhetoric of this Government. Canadian people need a Government that cares about their needs and is willing to respond not merely through words but through actions.

Bill C-21, if passed, will be disastrous for Canada. It will contribute to a greater division between the rich and the poor and will lead to a tremendous burden on our provinces. It creates a situation in which government is withdrawing from UI and, by doing so, privatizing one of the most important aspects of Canada's social security network.

• (2320)

[Translation]

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, and I conclude on this point, the only recourse, the last resort for Canadians will be welfare. It is scandalous, Mr. Speaker, to force people to such a solution!

[English]

Mr. Len Taylor (The Battlefords—Meadow Lake): Mr. Speaker, we are here tonight to debate Bill C-21, an Act to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act and the Employment and Immigration Department and Com-