

Unemployment Insurance Act

who rely on those benefits. I should like him to tell the hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) how to explain this to people in the Atlantic provinces where the unemployment rate is over 15 per cent and where unemployment insurance benefits are critical to income maintenance and planning for those families.

● (1642)

I can speak first hand on how this situation affects my riding. When I go there and meet with people on Friday night, Saturday and sometimes on Sunday I find that there are some who cannot get mortgage money at less than 13 per cent. There are others whose cars are being seized because they are unemployed or have been unemployed for so long that they are now on welfare. Some people, for example, cannot draw workmen's compensation for one reason or another. There are women who cannot get back on the labour market because when they become unemployed, the benefit payments are low compared to welfare. They cannot get on manpower training programs either because of problems I have mentioned to the minister.

I am concerned about the level of benefits being paid to Canadians, about the fact that the government appears to be enamoured of the concept that unemployment is apparently a voluntary phenomenon and that hundreds of thousands of people are choosing it rather than employment. This philosophy is based on anecdotal evidence and is not substantiated at all.

Mr. Boulanger: You should read all the court cases.

Mr. Rae: The hon. member for Mercier cries out that I should read something.

Mr. Boulanger: I said you should read the court cases.

Mr. Rae: I have read the court cases.

Mr. Boulanger: How many in the last year?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. I regret to inform the hon. member that his allotted time has expired. He may continue with the unanimous consent of the House.

Some hon. Members: No.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Lavoie (Hochelaga): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this clause because it seems to me there is surely a contradiction here. Indeed, reference is made to overpayments, as referred to also under part VIII or clause 14, if you prefer, about which an amendment has been introduced and on which I will have an opportunity to speak. In any case, Mr. Speaker, what is important is the problem as it relates to unemployment insurance, and it is obvious that this problem preoccupies all members.

When people come to see us—of course, we are there to look after them and we try to do a good job—sometimes that is extremely difficult. I am not blaming the minister. I know he is doing what he can. I know also opposition members are

[Mr. Rae.]

there, more often to criticize rather than suggest practical amendments to the legislation, but it seems to me the following could have been taken into account but the minister will probably be able in spite of the bill to take into account the fact that at a certain point when people come and see us and say: Young people do not want to work, they prefer to live off social welfare, that is not true, Mr. Speaker. There are some but not many. Often, Mr. Speaker, young people who come to see us want to work. That is not complicated but it seems to me that we should be providing more training whether of an academic nature or in other areas where young and older people also have access. There is often talk, Mr. Speaker, of managing to provide full employment. That is not complicated. It is possible in this country.

I have spoken about this before, and I will come back to it. I will ask you, Mr. Speaker, if what I say is out of order, to tell me. I think that young people, when someone receives—and I have talked about this before the parliamentary committee—and the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) knows that, just like all the others. I simply mentioned that we want to save money. It is obvious that the government must cut expenses one way or another but, Mr. Speaker, I would not like to penalize people who are unemployed against their will and who have no other choice. And the way it is, those people will in fact be penalized. Therefore, it seems to me that we should have a closer look into that situation in order to prevent those people from being penalized later. So, it is true that we must save money.

Obviously, I will talk about clause 5 which says that we are going to take the 66 $\frac{2}{3}$ per cent and make it 60 per cent of the income to save 6 $\frac{2}{3}$ per cent. But if, for instance, we tell someone who earns \$100 a week at a rate of \$5 an hour that he is going to work 20 hours a week under Canada Works or other projects, according to what the minister decides, it seems to me that will allow us to encourage people to go to work, and that we will in fact discourage them from depending on unemployment insurance.

It seems to me that only then can this become truly concrete. If we want to pass legislation, we must be reasonable. We should not penalize people who have no business being penalized. I have nothing against clause 1 as such, but I wonder whether this clause could not be broken up in two since it mentions part VIII which comes under clause 14. There seems to be a contradiction somewhere. I am not a lawyer, I am a simple citizen like everyone else, but I am trying to understand. Mr. Speaker, there is something which does not seem clear in all this. If someone in the House can clarify this for me, I would like him to do so because I want to understand and to participate with all my colleagues on both sides of the House in passing bills which will benefit all Canadians. After all, they are the ones who contribute, they are the ones who pay our salaries, they are the ones who pay for unemployment insurance. As a matter of fact, we should not even call it unemployment insurance, but rather employment insurance. In