

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

income. Where are the figures to support that argument? They were tall on statements but very short on programs.

Who else supported the minister on this bill? The Canadian Construction Association came before the committee. What did they have to say? Their contribution was some of the most unadulterated garbage that has ever been presented to a Commons committee. When we take a look at the friends in the minister's corner, we should all tremble with fear in this country. They said:

What is probably the most serious problem of all—

They are talking about the unemployment insurance program.

—is the impact on moral and social values. This is particularly evident among young people. The ease with which they are able to achieve a satisfactory way of living supported by long-term unemployment insurance is becoming increasingly popular and widespread amongst large numbers of young people. It is difficult to measure the price that our country will pay for this deterioration of values. Our society cannot stand further deterioration of moral standards.

There is not one shred of evidence to support this garbage. This is the kind of support the minister has in his corner. Perhaps that is why he was led the other night, in an unguarded moment in the committee last week, to accuse the young people, in Cape Breton specifically, of sitting with their thumbs in their mouths, of being thumbsuckers. He said:

I just cannot understand the thinking of the New Democratic Party . . . that we are forcing young people to move around this country.

Now, is that not just too bloody bad! That is the best thing that could ever happen to this country! I hope to hell they move all over the country!

We heard that suggestion before, that young people not only move around this country but that they move beyond the borders of Canada to look for work. The fact is that there are no jobs for young people to move to. It was thought that they could move to Alberta, that Alberta is now the Valhalla of employment opportunities. But that situation has changed. It is not so now. Even the minister's own department of manpower is refusing, for example, in Thompson, Manitoba, to relocate people from the Sudbury basin, even though Inco had hired people to go there from Sudbury. But lo and behold, the manpower office in Thompson will not relocate them. As a matter of fact, I have just drafted a letter to the minister with respect to that matter.

Who else is in the minister's corner, apart from the Conservative party in this House, the CMA, and the CCA, who said the following in their brief:

As the result of the Public Attitude Survey—September 1975—

Now we are legislating by public attitude.

—sixty per cent of Canadians felt that the eight weeks minimum entrance requirement is too short and that an entrance requirement of about six months would be more appropriate.

That is from the "Highlights of the Comprehensive Review" of the minister's own department, what was called the public attitude survey. So why not six years, as the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Rae) suggests, or why not eternity? Or why not until the unemployment rate drops to 4 per cent? That would be even further into the future than eternity, if it is conceivable at all.

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

Who else is in the minister's corner? None other than the Canadian Federation of Small Business who sent me a telegram saying that they carried out a survey among their members and found that 95 per cent of them supported Bill C-14.

We see lined up on the side of the minister the Conservative party, who is supposed to be the official opposition in the House, the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Canadian Construction Association and the Canadian Federation of Small Business. Who else do we see there? We see the Canadian Chamber of Commerce right smack in the minister's corner.

Who is on the opposite side? Who is saying to the minister that unemployment insurance is not the problem? None other than the Economic Council of Canada. In their 1976 report under the section headed, "People and Jobs", they said the following, and I want to quote it because it seems to me that it puts the whole matter into context. They have garnered the facts and analysed them and come to what I think would be some legitimate conclusions. They said:

We have looked closely at the provisions of the unemployment insurance system, as revised in 1971. We believe the system is comprehensive and generous by any standards and, as a second line of defence against financial hardship and income security, it has gone a long way towards eliminating poverty in this country . . . It—

The unemployment insurance program.

—has the effect, it may be argued, of transferring to persons most prone to involuntary unemployment, many of whom have less than average education, some of the income security that others now enjoy as a result of past public transfers of wealth implicit in the education and training systems.

It concludes as follows:

—It would, of course, be possible to try to eliminate abuses by cutting certain categories of claimants or the duration of benefits, or by extending the period of work before claimants become eligible for benefits. But such recommendations could prove harmful to persons most exposed to periodic and genuinely involuntary unemployment . . . For this reason we believe that much of the problem of abuse of unemployment insurance could be solved by two methods—by tightening administrative methods to get persons back to work, and by creating jobs to absorb them.

That has been the cry of those who have lined up against the minister and this vicious and discriminatory Bill C-14.

Who else is lined up against the minister on this bill? The following telegram was received by members of the committee:

● (1542)

The poverty task force of the United Church of Canada is opposed to any reduction in unemployment insurance benefits. The reductions of 1976 have already gone too far. We are also opposed to increases in entrance requirements. Fourteen weeks of work in the current qualifying period is more than enough. We don't believe that the rationale for discontinuing coverage to people who work under 20 hours per week as described in information paper 1 released by Employment and Immigration Canada makes a case. It's hard to comprehend these proposed amendments at a time when the unemployed number over a million.

Rev. Robert Lindsey, Associate Secretary, Division of Mission in Canada, United Church of Canada.

When that was brought to the minister's attention in committee, he made the facetious remark that he would speak to his pastor or to the United Church because that is where he