

the backs of the unemployed that his government has created. His caucus colleagues should be ashamed to see him present the proposals to parliament. However, given the demonstrated level of economic incompetence of this government and the demonstrated chutzpah of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), it may be that this government has no shame. It may be this government really believes that the only thing wrong with this economy is that some people are choosing not to work.

What is not working in this country is the current government. We in the opposition cannot allow this injustice to be perpetrated on those areas of the country with the highest rates of unemployment, without a fight. We have an obligation to try to get this ill-conceived design amended before it can be inflicted upon the Canadian people. The minister said, when he moved to tighten the unemployment insurance program, he well expected criticism. He also said that informed criticism, which is sensitive to the views of Canadians, is the lifeblood of parliament, and he welcomed this sort of constructive criticism. He also asked the House to listen to the Canadian people who are angry at the abuse of the current plan. The Canadian people, Mr. Speaker, will be truly angry if we tinker with this plan again and do not cut the abuse.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, the discussion on the motion now before us concerning Bill C-14 is further evidence how difficult it is to co-ordinate a consistent and efficient action when the basic problem is overlooked. So we are now discussing a piece of legislation and related amendments the purpose of which is to reduce the expenditures related to unemployment insurance benefits. If our society had developed normally, that is if legislators had been able to introduce bills designed to actually enable each citizen to earn a decent living and enjoy a minimum of well-being and even of comfort, we would not have to deal with cuts in unemployment insurance benefits. But since we have not yet managed to find means to enable every worker, every unskilled labourer, every able-bodied citizen in this country to work and thus earn a decent living proudly and with dignity, Mr. Speaker, it seems we shall always be discussing false problems. I can easily appreciate the difficulties facing the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Cullen), but I am not prepared to accept his method to curb alleged abuses with respect to unemployment insurance. Mr. Speaker, it is very important in this House that at least one member should tackle the root of the problems. What we should be discussing now is the reasons why a country as vast as Canada, endowed with so many resources, where labour should be at a premium has to contend with such a high unemployment rate, and our inability to create jobs for all willing blue and white collar workers. This is outrageous. One of these days, we shall have to deal squarely with this issue and find ways and means to put an end to the scourge of unemployment, once for all.

Mr. Speaker, as we discuss a cutback in unemployment benefits and the prevention of abuse by unemployment insur-

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ance recipients we realize that this government continues to follow a financial and economic course which is alien to the financial interests of our country and indirectly, or even directly the Canadian workers' interests. Moreover, when the government unashamedly admits to the need for massive imports of certain products and consumer goods that we could easily produce ourselves, Mr. Speaker, I suggest that unless we can solve this basic problem, we shall always go around in a vicious circle of increasing unemployment with no solution in sight. We are being unfair to the honest worker who, has to suffer not only the loss of his job, but the source of income he used to rely on in these circumstances. This is a point we should always bear in mind, and although all over the world modern society is now facing the same problems, we should not let our country and our parliament use this as an excuse to evade the problems. Instead we should invest more time searching for solutions. Among those cuts announced a few months ago, the effects of which have been experienced for some time and will continue to be felt in the days and weeks ahead, I note some rather painful examples in my constituency. For example, in the small town of Parent, a remote village in the northern part of the riding of Champlain where a meteorological station was manned by five employees, under its arbitrary reductions, the government has laid off those people. We wonder to what extent savings are made when figures prove easily that not only will there be no savings but that it is meant to ridicule the public. However, if the disastrous condition of the unemployed is worsened by the reduction of the benefits to which they are entitled, Mr. Speaker, we will soon find ourselves in a dilemma which can only increase our social problems and the economic difficulties which have literally overwhelmed us for some years. Therefore, the government should at least accept to come up with a close study and investigation of the situation so that—by basing its reflection on fundamental principles—it will be in a position to radically change the purpose of our legislation and that instead of guaranteeing a right to unemployment to the people of Canada, it guarantees them a right to work, a right to earn a minimum decent income. Mr. Speaker, we would have gone a long way toward that goal and we would be interested in collaborating very closely to develop a new formula that would be most appropriate for all workers of this country. But not only do we not study the basic principles on which to rely but on the contrary palliatives, emergency remedies, short-term solutions are being resorted to, in order to resolve major problems which will still be there next year or the year after in all their magnitude. That is what I have noticed for years, Mr. Speaker, and it is deplorable to see that as representatives having been democratically elected by the citizens of that country we are unable to find the appropriate solutions. And sometimes I wonder where that is going to lead us to, how long we are going to go on like this and let the situation deteriorate to a point where within a few generations we will be faced with a real catastrophe.