

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

first and most important thing is that this Government has recognized that unemployment is not supposed to be a permanent way of life but that people must have an opportunity to get themselves back fully participating in the labour force. Consequently, we see a greater emphasis on retraining and on assisting individuals to find alternative job opportunities.

As I said before, we see also a targeting attempt to deal with the abuses that have been present in the system that have drained some of the funds from time to time. There are stiffer penalties for quitters. There are penalties for those who seek to avoid work. There are stiffer penalties against cheaters. That is as it should be. This may not apply to my friends opposite, but I will tell them that in the part of Canada I come from we believe that a person should do a day's work for a day's pay. We do not believe that systems like unemployment insurance exist to be ripped off by those who do not share the values that we hold high and that are the basis of what is good in Canada.

This Bill and the budget that goes with it seeks to make this system more self-financing which, as I said before, is the way any insurance system should be, noting that those premium increases that come with the budget are not going to be burdened upon those who are unemployed. The unemployed do not pay the premiums. Those who can afford the premiums are being taxed with them.

There are some changes. There will be an increase in some qualification periods. There will be reduced periods during which people can collect. That is exactly the way the system should go.

First, the extended periods of qualification are to be applied to those areas that do not suffer from extreme or high unemployment. Similarly, studies have shown that the people who draw to the extent of the system are the people who are not really intended to be served by the system.

Once again we find that the amendments to the Act being brought forward are clearly in accord with common sense, propriety and wisdom. They preserve the safety net which is the fundamental important aspect of an unemployment insurance system. I am not saying that

there might not be a need for a little bit of fine tuning along the way.

**Some Hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. McCreath:** I look forward to the fact that we may see some of that done at the committee stage. Indeed, I may have a word or two to say about it myself.

However, on the whole, what we have here is a revision of the Act that moves it in the right direction. I see Mr. Speaker waving to me so I must wind up briefly. How will this affect Atlantic Canada? Unemployment insurance will continue to respond to the regional disparity circumstances that affect Atlantic Canadians. The increased qualifications will not hit Atlantic Canada, providing we have changes in some of the boundaries by which the unemployment insurance rates are computed. That is absolutely essential, and I am sure the Government has heard what many Members, particularly rural Members, have said in that regard. Implementation of the Bill should not precede the implementation of the change in those boundaries so that they will reflect actual unemployment rates in different parts of Canada.

• (2140)

The unemployment insurance system, while one of the most controversial aspects of Canadian life, is an extremely important aspect of Canadian life. We must continually mould and modify that system so that it meets the needs of Canadians and remains consistent with the priorities of Canadians. That is the direction in which this Bill goes. I am proud to support the Bill and commend the Government for its introduction.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Fernand Robichaud (Beauséjour):** Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to express my objections to the legislation before the House, Bill C-21, which contains proposals for major changes in the unemployment insurance program. Unlike my colleague from Nova Scotia who just spoke, I believe that these changes are certainly not what is best for the people of the Atlantic provinces.

Over the years, the unemployment insurance program has been able to provide families in the Atlantic provinces with some measure of security. Of course we would rather work, we would rather have jobs, we would rather work all year round instead of working only 10, 12, 15, 20 or 25 weeks. We would like to work all round, year first, because it pays better, and second, because we want to work and we enjoy working. However, since the jobs just are not there, the unemployment insurance program provides families with income security. This means that families can depend on a fairly stable source of income