

I will close by telling hon. members how I treat people who come to my office with unemployment insurance problems. I have never had any difficulty in this procedure. I tell them that if they are legitimately entitled to unemployment insurance, then I will see that they get it. I tell them that I will do everything that I can. I tell them that if they are entitled under the act, under the regulations, to get unemployment insurance, and they are genuinely unemployed and trying to get job, I will help them. That is the purpose of unemployment insurance. However, I tell them that if they are trying to fiddle the system that I am not their man. I have followed that procedure for eight years and I have never had any difficulty. I have never yet had anyone who has come in to see me say that they did not like that attitude. They all agree and tell me that no one should fiddle system. If we all take that attitude I think we could help the administration along.

I just want to leave those few thoughts with hon. members. I think there is a job to be done inside the commission as well as to look at the act, the statute and the regulations. Attitudes today are most important. Attitudes toward people who are past 45 or 50 years of age—in that age bracket—are very important. They are very sensitive. Most of them have not been unemployed before. They are embarrassed and feel out of place before a younger person when they come into the office asking for advice, assistance and help. Somewhere along the line we have to get a little more humanity and humility back into this operation.

Miss Coline Campbell (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to speak on Bill C-3. As we all know, unemployment insurance provides financial assistance to workers during periods of temporary unemployment. Temporary unemployment may be due to a lack of jobs or it may be due to seasonal variations in employment. That, I think, is also due to the size of the country and the types of regions in which we live.

One must never forget that we need such a program. We have to protect the individuals who are looking for employment. Tonight I would like to talk about some of the discontent that I feel about the unemployment insurance program. In particular, I am disappointed in two aspects of the program that have been brought forth to date under the Unemployment Insurance Act. One would be the use of the money that has been saved in the past from unemployment insurance amendments, and also the money which will be saved with this bill in the financing of the premiums.

It seems to me that there should be a return of this money for more job creation. Areas such as my own which will be affected by this bill have been affected in the past. They are not seeing job creations and are not seeing year-round jobs created. I must say that I am discontent with the money and where it is going. I am concerned there is not more job creation.

The second aspect is that there does not seem to be any solution to the harshness of the unemployment insurance rates that are applied to the various unemployment insurance regions or economic regions used by manpower offices. The

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unemployment insurance regions are those used by the employer, but they are based on the economic regions as derived from Statistics Canada. In the course of my remarks tonight, I will discuss some of these injustices, or the harshness that I feel is incorporated and being continued by the present system of unemployment insurance and this bill in terms of the use of economic regions.

● (2140)

I would first like to deal with the extension of the variable entrance requirement of ten to 14 weeks beyond December of this year. The variable entrance requirement was used in the past for three reasons. The first was the establishment of benefits. Whether you are entitled to receive benefits depends on the variable entrance requirement in a given area. It is related to the economic regions and the unemployment rate that that manpower office must deal with in the area.

It is also used for the extended benefit period. The last reason is in the former amendments for repeaters in the program. I feel that this area has been the most harsh. In my view, this variable entrance requirement implied a fictional unemployment insurance rate in some areas of Canada. The minister is well aware of my concerns in the use of these statistics and the consequence it has had.

The amendment before us tonight will allow for the continuation of the variable entrance requirement from ten to 14 weeks, at least from December, 1980, to June, 1982, coincidentally the 18 months while the study is being carried out. In other words, if we do not pass this as of January, everyone across Canada will be required to have 14 weeks for a variable entrance requirement in order to receive benefits.

There are pros and cons to that. There are areas of this country that need the variable entrance requirement. However, it is most unjust for one area in proximity to another area to not be included in the same entrance requirement. This is what happened in Nova Scotia. There, all of Cape Breton and most of mainland Nova Scotia have an unemployment rate, yet in the southern end of Nova Scotia there is a different unemployment insurance rate based on an economic region UI rate. They are penalized for being in another area, an economic region that includes Lunenburg, which has a very good economic base.

I wish to continue on with this variable entrance requirement. I do not say that it should not be extended. I just say that when talking about the variable entrance requirement, we must remember that it is not uniform across Canada. In other words, it is variable. I will now deal with the harshness of that application.

For example, two unemployment insurance regions in Nova Scotia, that of Annapolis and Digby, would correspond to the economic regions used by Statistics Canada. I believe they are economic regions four and five. Digby includes Digby county, as well as the counties of Yarmouth, Shelburne, Queens and Lunenburg. The Annapolis area includes Annapolis, Kings and probably Hants. Manpower use two unemployment insurance regions. In Annapolis the averaged unemployment insurance