

the blame for fraud and abuses on individuals. Yet we know that in a great many cases abuses are the fault of the Unemployment Insurance Commissioner's employees in various regions.

Attempts have been made to correct some of the abuses by laying down strict or unjustified regulations which have in fact resulted in further abuses by the government against individuals.

Earlier I heard mention of unemployed persons on farms, who have to pay unemployment insurance premiums but who are not eligible for benefits. Thus, in many cases in Quebec, as a result of the governments' antiquated measures, some farmers are unable to earn a decent living and are forced to seek work off their farms in order to meet their operating expenses.

When they go out to work, they are forced to pay unemployment insurance premiums, but when they leave their winter jobs, or if they lose them because they have to work on forest concessions in the winter, if they then apply for unemployment insurance benefits, the next summer they are turned down because they are agricultural workers or farmers. There are many such cases when on the one hand the government takes advantage of individuals while on the other hon. members become civil servants claiming justice for these same individuals.

● (1750)

The same thing applies in the case of students: they are compelled to pay contributions under the Unemployment Insurance Act, but when it is time to receive unemployment insurance benefits they are refused for several reasons, real or fictional. In fact, we found out last winter that the minister had somehow sent a note or a letter to his office managers everywhere in Canada. Two days later, he denied this in another communication and finally wrote a third one to contradict the first two. So there were abuses on the part of the government in this field. Abuses were also noticed in the publicity made by the department regarding unemployment insurance benefits. We can see advertising television which continuously tell people: \$100 a week, that is the unemployment insurance benefit you will receive. They forget to explain the facts as they really are. Students are told: If you contribute under the Unemployment Insurance Act, you will qualify for benefits. As a result of its misleading advertising, this government forgets to mention small and hidden regulations which cancel the eligibility for benefits.

The unemployed are disqualified; every day, new statistics on the reduction of regional unemployment are published and we realize that this reduction is not due to an upsurge of employment but mainly, in particular in eastern Quebec regions, to the disentanglement of unemployed people or of those who are receiving unemployment insurance benefits. All reasons are good for disqualification and yet, through discussions with managers of offices, we can find regulations which might perhaps enable these people to be eligible again for unemployment insurance.

All kinds of abuses have been made by officials of the Unemployment Insurance Commission. They keep on saying that someone has been disqualified because he refused a job, but they often forget to question the other party, that of manpower and employment: Did you offer a

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job to this guy in this region? You then get the following answer: We have not offered any since none is available! Those are the answers we get.

On the other hand, they are ready to disqualify someone because he did not find a job, because he did not take the necessary steps while the Department of Manpower and Immigration is perfectly aware that there is no employment available in such or such region. People are disqualified because they did not search for work or because they cannot prove they did. Then, officials should first offer jobs to the claimants and if an individual refused a good job, as prescribed in the act, then he would be disqualified, but they must offer him something before disqualifying him.

But no, as I was saying earlier, these are abuses committed by the department, abuses that the hon. member for Verdun (Mr. Mackasey), consciously or not, has failed to mention earlier, simply to try and excuse this government and condemn individuals rather than something else.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, I shall say that the second report of the investigation on unemployment insurance will recognize that the abuses are not committed only by individuals, but are caused, in several cases, by this government through some ridiculous regulations, by round-about regulations which force the individual to have a battle of wits with the government and to seek round-about ways of obtaining government assistance. In fact, we should not delude ourselves. It is not the government which has encouraged development in the disadvantaged regions. We can be sure that it is not making much progress in this area. I heard the hon. member for Verdun say earlier that the department of Regional Economic Expansion was encouraging development in the so-called "under-developed" regions. I am the member for such a region, and all requests for loans made by small industries to the department of Regional Economic Expansion have been refused, with the result that we have a 20 per cent unemployment rate, while they play around at disqualifying unemployed persons. Of course, the statistics show that in the North Shore region the unemployment rate is a mere 10 or 12 per cent, but in fact—and the Manpower and Immigration department employees in the North Shore region tell us so themselves—the unemployment rate in the region is still 21 per cent. But once again, nothing effective or tangible is being done to create jobs, and there are complaints that people are trying to survive by getting around the poorly designed regulations.

I have no wish to defend dishonest people, but I do wish to warn the government that before it tries to lower or punish human beings, it should begin to create jobs, by investing in these regions enough money to create employment, and then the unemployed will no longer resort to fraud to obtain unemployment insurance benefits. They will go to work because it will be more profitable for them to work than to rely only on unemployment insurance as is the case at present.

The government should proceed gradually. Instead of being negative, it should begin to be positive, because people are fed up with delays and reasons such as those given a while ago by the member for Verdun.