Clause 18 sets out 13 specific circumstances that amount to just cause for voluntarily leaving employment, including sexual or other harassment, movement of a spouse or a dependent child, discrimination, and unsafe or significant changes in working conditions. It also provides the authority to prescribe other circumstances by regulation.

Clause 21 establishes a new rule that a claimant who is dismissed for misconduct or who voluntarily leaves employment without just cause is disqualified from receiving unemployment insurance benefits for the entire benefit period. Currently the act prescribes a penalty of several weeks' waiting period for such claimants but does not disqualify them altogether. Opponents of the bill have argued that the present penalty is a sufficient deterrent and that the bill and, indeed, the existing act unfairly place the burden of proof on the claimant to establish that he or she left employment for just cause or was not fired for misconduct.

Your committee heard from five groups. They have already been named by the Leader of the Opposition, so I will not go through that again. Primarily they objected to what they viewed as the insurance confiscation of benefits from the unemployed amounting to about $1 billion a year, a shift in the balance of power to employers, and the effect of the bill in fostering a negative view of the unemployed. They also voiced their concerns about the limited time available to consider the bill in committee and indeed in this chamber.

In response to these concerns, the government points to other countries where claimants who have left employment voluntarily or been dismissed for cause are disqualified. It insists that the benefit of the doubt is likely to be given to the claimant when eligibility is being determined.

Clause 22 in particular specifies that where the claimant appears to be ineligible for benefits, both the claimant and the employer must have an opportunity to explain the circumstances, and the reasons offered must be considered in the adjudication of the claim.

Furthermore, Clause 25 authorizes the chairperson of the board of referees to conduct *in camera* hearings of sexual or other harassment cases and to prevent details of such hearings from being published.

Honourable senators, that generally summarizes what took place in the committee. I should just like to correct perhaps one or two other points. Senator Simard indicated that I, as chairman, decided who was going to be heard by the committee. I did ask the staff of the Committees Branch and some people in my office to do an analysis so that groups that were known affiliates could be reduced. I also asked them to do an analysis of the requests, because I wanted to know which of the groups had been heard before the committee of the other place.

I had some working papers — and we called them "working papers", not "recommendations" — as to the results of that condensation.

Senator Frith is perfectly correct when he says there were some 43 requests to be heard by the committee. There is no question about that. We went through them all to determine which groups were affiliated with each other, and where they had stated they were affiliated with each other, and we came up with one group. We also looked at it in terms of who had already been heard before a committee of Parliament.

It was not I who decided. I do not care whether you want to blame me or not, Senator Simard. I made it abundantly clear in the meeting that I was not making any recommendations. I was simply putting the facts before the committee; they made up their own minds. They moved a motion dealing with essentially what was in one of the working papers. The chairman is obliged to do what the committee orders him to do, and that is the way I proceeded.

I am not so thin-skinned that I am bothered by this all that much, but, as I said, with my new personality, being completely objective, non-partisan, and cooperative, I wanted the Senate to know what happened in the committee.

• (1020)

Senator Hébert: May I ask a question of the honourable senator?

Senator Olson: Certainly.

Senator Hébert: I should like to know what kind of advertising the committee undertook to inform the population of Canada that they could appear before the committee. In which newspapers were advertisements run? What other media sources were used to announce the hearings of the committee? How long ago were such announcements made? I ask these questions in order to find out if people who wished to appear before the committee had enough time to prepare a brief and to arrange their visit to Ottawa.

My second question is this: Was it envisaged that the committee leave Ottawa and go to the people of this country in other regions, perhaps into the region of the Honourable Senator Olson, for example?

Senator Olson: I will answer the latter part of the first question first. I do not think that we advertised in any newspapers so that people could have some time to prepare a brief, to use the words of the honourable senator. It was perfectly obvious to me that they did not need any more time. They had their briefs ready. The requests started to come to the clerk of the committee long before the Senate received the bill. How they found out, I cannot answer. I do not know. I suppose they read about it in the paper. They sent requests to be heard. In many cases, they also sent the brief that they intended to present.