

which farm workers often must endure. By working through a labour contractor, a farm worker is, in fact, working the whole time for the same employer, no matter how many farms are actually worked on. That is the principal service provided by these farm labour contractors who, in turn, pocket a large part of the worker's pay, often up to 40 per cent of the worker's wages. But many farm workers are faced with a difficult choice of either working independently of the contractor and forgoing UI benefits during the winter off-season or working for the farm labour contractor who pockets a huge portion of that worker's pay.

Last fall, the Canadian Farm Workers Union approached the Human Rights Commission to rule on Section 16 of the UI regulations. It argued that it was racially discriminatory since it discriminates against farm workers who are largely members of minority groups. The union said that because of Section 16, the federal government was the best friend a farm labour contractor ever had. It said that Section 16 was the Magna Carta of unscrupulous farm labour contractors.

The Canadian Farm Workers Union is calling on the government to delete Section 16 of the regulations, and I want to support its demand. By deleting Section 16, the government could accomplish two things. It would provide farm workers with a modicum of justice, and it would eliminate the need for farm labour contractors who have been milking farm workers for too long.

Another inequity in the UI regulations discriminates against inland fishermen, an occupation of many of my constituents. Under the present regulations, fishermen were declared to be eligible for benefits during their off-season, but the regulations also define their off-season strictly as running from December to mid-May. In my constituency and in many other areas of prairie Canada, fishermen have a winter season which generally runs from November through until March or April. When they are laid off or they catch their quota by some time in March or April, they are not eligible for UI payments for the rest of the off-season. It is an unfair regulation which my colleague the hon. member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy) and I have been calling upon the department to change for a number of months, indeed years. All we hear from the government is that it is working on it. It is working very, very slowly on it.

Mr. Young: Until the next election.

Mr. Sargeant: We in the New Democratic Party support the bill before us today, Bill C-114. It is, given the current state of unemployment insurance and what the minister seems to have in mind for the future of unemployment insurance, a valuable provision to protect those Canadian workers employed in seasonal occupations. We call for the government's continued support for unemployment insurance and the strengthening of the program. However, we are suspicious of the government's proposals to make UI a more effective tool, tilting workers toward work and away from unemployment insurance. Those kinds of proposals are only window dressing for the government to abdicate its responsibility for income protection for

the working people of Canada. Of course, that is what unemployment insurance should be. It should be only income protection. It should not take the place of a vibrant economy and job creation as an answer to the growing number of unemployed. We have seen the government stake its development dreams on the energy megaprojects and we have seen those projects go down in flames. Now we hear that the government is expecting the economy to continue to decline for the rest of this year and that it has no intention to stimulate it or to mount any realistic and effective programs to stem the tide of unemployment. What we want and what the people of Canada want is an economic strategy which will create jobs to provide incomes for Canadians. Nothing I have seen in the three years that I have been in this House suggests that the federal government, whether Liberals or Tories are at the helm, is about to deliver such a program.

Hon. Walter Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to join in the debate for just a few moments and to join my colleague, the hon. member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie), in saying that it is the intention of our party to support this bill and to allow the matter to go through on all three readings this afternoon so that it can become law, bearing in mind the time limit under which the minister operates. But I want to say that while we are discussing what I believe to be improvements to, or at least in terms of the existing economic situation the maintenance of, the system of unemployment insurance, it must cross the mind of any hon. member who speaks in the House of Commons on this bill and who considers the fact that we are focusing this day on unemployment insurance, that we are really discussing a program which has had to be augmented and changed, not because of failures of unemployment insurance, but, rather, because of the failures of the economic policies of this government, policies which have refused to recognize the realities of the country. That is really the bottom line of all of our discussions, whether we are referring to UIC, student employment programs, or what have you. If we had a reasonable economic policy in the country that spoke to growth, to incentive, to reasonable trust and use of the exuberance of the private sector, which enticed people who now save their money in savings accounts to invest that money, to build plants and equipment and to expand their businesses, I expect that the House would not be concentrating to the extent it is on unemployment insurance and the problems facing the unemployed.

I also worry that when we discuss this matter we always seem to speak in terms of percentages of unemployed and discuss for how long people who comprise these percentages are without work. The percentages do not illustrate the human problems of the people behind those statistics. I think the government must address those programs, as well. I know that the minister is involved in some job-creating programs, summer programs and others. He and I know that while the dollars spent on those programs create some jobs, they are very costly and temporary jobs. I hope that in the course of considering its economic program for the future, whether before or after Versailles, the government will consider the cost of those jobs