

• (12:50 p.m.)

[Translation]

**Mr. Roland Godin (Portneuf):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the additional assistance which Bill No. C-197 will give to the great number of unemployed in our country. However, I think that this bill will bring about no improvement for Canadians as a whole because, once again, our manufacturers, our industrialists, in short, all our employers and workers will have to spend more money.

You will recall the increase in the sales tax on building materials which led many businesses to bankruptcy and caused a decline in the rate of construction.

It is obvious that an increase in the unemployment insurance contributions paid by workers and employers will cause serious difficulties. It is unfortunate that they will be called upon, once again, to pay the price of automation since, on the whole, the problem we face is due to automation, the consequence of many centuries of efforts and experience.

New inventions and technological progress should make it possible to reduce the working hours of Canadians who could have longer hours of leisure and use them for their own development. It is true that the blue or white collar workers depend a lot on all kinds of machines, from small motors to electronic computers and heavy machinery operated by oil, electricity or electrons. The results in that field are wonderful but, at the same time, the worker feels a growing uneasiness.

The worker who should be happy about those satisfactory results, who should be proud of the methods he has developed to earn his living, is worried and his happiness is replaced by fear. In his work, he depends on the machine, but he is afraid of being displaced by it. Workers have never been so worried. Our unemployed fall in two clearly defined groups: Some who would willingly do anything to keep their jobs and others who are desperately seeking work.

The present act is a mere palliative, in that it only enables workers to earn a bare living. Both groups are handicapped. Those who keep their jobs must pay more and those who lose them must manage with \$30 or \$35 a week to support their families decently, when under normal conditions, they could be earning from \$100 to \$125 a week.

The officials who have to administer the Unemployment Insurance Act are also faced with serious problems, because they are caught, on the one hand, between a limited

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amount of contributions and, on the other hand, an unlimited number of unemployed. A large number of citizens are also cornered by rules requiring a certain number of weeks in a given period to be eligible for benefits.

The problem grows more rapidly than the legislation improves. The bill now under study was thought out two years ago, or last year, and it will be obsolete when it becomes law, because it will have been overtaken by the higher cost of living. I also maintain that the present legislation is incomplete, since it does not cover all workers, all Canadians. Thousands of people are unemployed and go to the welfare bureau; thousands of people who have not had a chance to work regularly in the last year or so are forced to go to welfare bureau. Thousands of young people who are 19, 20, 21 years of age and who left school last year or this year with grade 6 or 7 diplomas, or trade certificates, are up against the same problem because, all in all, the act does not protect them.

These men did not work long enough and did not contribute enough to be eligible for benefits or for the training program. They do not have the right to register for the so-called retraining courses, simply because they have not contributed quite enough. Unless they have been unemployed or seeking work for three years, they cannot obtain help to improve their lot.

Unemployment insurance, which is financed jointly by the federal and provincial governments, is therefore financed through indirect and hidden taxes. In short, the unemployed finance themselves with their own assistance through the taxes they pay on all the products they consume.

Too many people are forced to resort to unemployment insurance, which is paid only after investigations have been made, and the officials responsible for them are overworked. Since the unemployed increase in numbers from week to week, one must often wait—regrettably—two or three months before obtaining anything.

Nevertheless, I shall take this opportunity to congratulate the department; we may not like to admit it, but there are, in the manpower centres, honest and respectable employees, people who truly work and are sincere, who want progress and try to help their fellow-men, people with good understanding. However, these people are human and they may have different ways of interpreting the law.