

It is regrettable because I was quite willing to co-operate with the Government in dealing with all stages of the Bill in one day. I simply ask the Government to be more sensitive in these matters.

This Bill extends the variable entrance requirement for unemployment insurance for another year. Let me explain the variable entrance requirement. According to the original unemployment insurance law, individuals in Canada had to work for at least 14 weeks in order to qualify for unemployment insurance. In 1977 the Liberal government of the day recognized that in some regions of Canada the rates of unemployment were so high and it was so difficult to find work that it decided to permit individuals in those high unemployment regions to qualify for unemployment insurance after 10 weeks.

Therefore, we now have a variable entrance requirement of 10 to 14 weeks in order to qualify for unemployment insurance benefits. The entrance requirement depends on the region in which one lives and the rate of unemployment in that region. For example, if one lives in a region of very high unemployment, then one will qualify for unemployment insurance benefits after 10 weeks. If one lives in a region that does not have a very high unemployment rate, one will qualify after 14 weeks. Therefore, the entrance requirement of between 10 to 14 weeks depends on the rate of unemployment.

This is a Liberal measure that was introduced on a temporary basis to deal with regional unemployment problems and has been extended from year to year. The Government is asking us to extend it for one more year, until January 3, 1989. We support that.

There is very good reason for continuing this variable entrance requirement. There is still a very high rate of unemployment in the regions of the country. The official rate of unemployment in Newfoundland for the month of October was 17.1 per cent; 13.7 per cent in New Brunswick; 12.7 per cent in Prince Edward Island; 11.4 per cent in British Columbia; and 11 per cent in Nova Scotia.

The Government is proud to announce week-in and week-out that it is very successful in creating jobs. However, I must remind the Government that nearly all those new jobs have been created in the greater Toronto region in southern Ontario. I must also remind the Government that, despite the jobs that have been created, the national rate of unemployment is still 8.4 per cent, or approximately 1.1 million Canadians who are still unemployed, mostly in the regions of the country. While that unemployment rate of 8.4 per cent is a drop from the high rate recorded during the recession, it is still not down to the pre-recession rate of 7.5 per cent unemployment in 1981.

The Government hesitates to admit this, but it should be pointed out as well that many of the new jobs are in low-wage and non-union occupations. Much of that is due to the new contracting out policies that governments and the private sector have adopted. Rather than utilizing their employees

Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971

within the company or Government department, their full time workers are laid off and a contract is let to smaller companies to do such things as cleaning and maintenance, advertising and so on. Frequently, those smaller firms operate by using non-union workers at minimum wage, especially in jobs like maintenance and cleaning. In addition, many of those jobs are part-time or temporary jobs that may last from two months to a year. Furthermore, those jobs may entail only 12 to 14 hours a week. This may be acceptable employment in some cases, but there is a growing number of people with part time jobs who would rather work full time.

The number of jobs being created in low-wage, non-union, part-time and temporary employment has led to a widening gap between the rich and poor in Canada. The well trained skilled professionals and unionized workers are being paid well, but there is a growing number of people who are in non-unionized, minimum wage part-time or temporary work.

It was pointed out earlier this year that for the first time in 15 years after the average wage of women and men had considerably narrowed, suddenly the wage gap between men and women workers had widened. As a result of this phenomenon of part-time and temporary work, there is a larger number of what are called working poor.

While part-time work at a fast food outlet may be acceptable to single people who are going to school, it is not enough for those who are attempting to build a home and support a family. While the creation of these types of jobs is better than nothing, it is not the answer and is not something of which the Government should be proud. According to the most recent polls, unemployment is still the greatest concern of Canadians because they feel insecure in the types of jobs that are being created and in the benefits which they provide.

While the variable entrance requirement for unemployment insurance is beneficial, it is not the answer to the problem. There must be a greater commitment to regional economic development by the Government. Since it was elected in 1984, it has cut back huge sums of money from regional economic development.

We also need a greater commitment toward more resources and financing for post-secondary education, especially for literacy training. Without that training and education, one cannot qualify for the well paying permanent jobs, and it is those people with no training or low education who are drifting into these lesser jobs.

I repeat that we support this Bill because the Government is extending a measure that was introduced by Liberal governments in the past. We regret, however, that once again the Government has rejected all serious reform of the unemployment insurance system. It set up the Forget Commission to make recommendations with respect to reform. We did not agree with all the recommendations of the Forget report, especially the key recommendations, when that report was referred to the Standing Committee on Labour, Employment and Immigration, but after studying the report we made 90