

Unemployment Insurance Act

Mr. Speaker, that assertion by the hon. member for Charlevoix, and I am very pleased, knocked the bottom out of the thesis of some people who try to make the public believe, not only during election campaigns but in other circumstances, that a given region will never experience economic health if it does not elect members from the majority party. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely wrong because the Canadian parliament is a responsible institution where, I am sure, all members co-operate in a constructive manner to help as much as possible the government meet its responsibilities, which consist in assuring all regions of the country equal opportunity for development in order that all workers find jobs and earn their living honourably, which would allow us to reduce considerably unemployment insurance problems, benefit problems, and all kinds of resulting difficulties.

Mr. Speaker, I sometimes wonder if the government is really willing to fight against unemployment or if it is not in fact fighting against the unemployed. This is not precisely the same. Fighting against unemployment involves taking the proper steps to ensure that in our country all levels of industries, businesses and farms will develop, so that our labour force, our workers, can find jobs and earn their living.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, in the last few years we have faced a major inflation and unemployment problem, and one has only to read the different budget speeches to realize that the government at every session, for instance in the twenty-seventh, twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth parliaments, always tries to fight against inflation even at the risk of increasing unemployment.

In another Speech from the Throne, one can read that the government wants to put some emphasis on the fight against unemployment at the risk of increasing inflation. It was exactly the same thing in speeches following the budget statement, be it under Mr. Benson, then minister of finance, or Mr. Turner, or Mr. Macdonald or Mr. Chrétien; it was always the same. The budget is designed to fight inflation. This has lasted long enough. Of course, it will increase unemployment, but unemployment is better than inflation. At other times the budget is designed to curb unemployment. Of course, it will increase inflation, but it is better to suffer from inflation than from unemployment. Mr. Speaker, we are getting nowhere this way. We keep doing the same thing without finding really good solutions.

In my remarks, I want to tell the government how much I hope it will finally present measures designed to promote positively the love of their work among workers so as to encourage them to accept jobs and give the best performance they can to earn a living and serve the country well.

Mr. Speaker, I am certainly not the only one to find it unacceptable that after making workers take retraining and refresher courses, after making them satisfy all sorts of requirements so that they can qualify and be able to accept a job in the labour market, these people, regardless of their age

or responsibilities, after following religiously the advice of counsellors on their suitability for such and such line of work, after graduating from their course, can be asked by a prospective employer: Do you have any experience? Mr. Speaker, if I were 20 years old and if I told a prospective employer that I had just completed some sort of training course and this employer asked me if I had any experience, I think I would just slap him across the face. That is an insult. Someone says: I have just completed my studies, I have my diploma, I am ready to enter the work force, can you hire me, and is being asked if he or she has any experience. Mr. Speaker, if all those people who ask if the person looking for a job has any experience, if all those business executives, those departmental officials from whatever department and at whatever level of government, be it municipal, provincial or federal, had been asked the same question, not many of them would have been given a job. Everyone deserves a chance before being refused. The person has prepared him or herself. The government has made expenditures to help him acquire the skills needed for a particular type of work, a certain role, a trade, but if all employers refuse him or her the opportunity to work because of lack of experience, then he or she will never acquire the experience. The only experience that would then be acquired is that of rejection. That person will feel incapable of doing anything worth-while in this country and will say: I am now prepared to spend the rest of my life on welfare. Being a welfare recipient is not a vocation, Mr. Speaker. There are other things you can do in life. And that is where I would like once again to strongly suggest to the government, during the hard times we are going through, when the private sector cannot use all this manpower, all this youth, that the public authorities should take up their responsibilities by systematically organizing public works to build public facilities and things which are an absolute must for the population.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I see you are about to tell me that my allotted time has expired, I am willing to accept this, however I would like to suggest once again to the Minister of Employment and Immigration that, along with his colleagues, he should review once again this formula of guaranteed annual income that was put forward and was examined by the federal government and the provinces; this should be reconsidered and established as soon as possible, giving the opportunity to ensure that everybody has a minimum annual income, and leaving to each the hope to earn more by his work and thus ensuring for himself a better standard of living.

[English]

Mr. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, the first amendment to this bill is unlike the first amendment to the United States constitution, which gives the people of the United States free speech. We are obviously going to be denied that because of the imposition of the provisions of Standing Order 75C. The analogy I am making is a bad one, but the first amendment of a number of amendments which have been