

*Government Orders*

The next rectangle represents UI claims for that year: three million. When that figure is broken down we are given two smaller rectangles. One represents people who applied for UI who did not quit their jobs. In 1991 there were 2.35 million who made claims under those circumstances.

People who did quit their jobs totalled 650,000. That number is broken down even further. Of the 650,000 Canadians who made UI claims after quitting their jobs, 460,000 were found to have quit their jobs with good reason. The total number of people who quit their jobs without good reason was 190,000 out of a total of three million, a mere sliver on the departmental chart.

While I agree that even 190,000 free-loaders, if they are free-loaders, are 190,000 too many, I would suggest to the minister, to the government and to Canadians watching today that this is not the problem the government is making it out to be. The problem is termination and lay-offs not voluntary quitters. The Conservative economic agenda has been the failure and as a result we must pay as a society with the economic hardships that Bill C-113 will create.

I know that the minister of employment disagrees vehemently with what I have just said. It has become clear in this debate that he views social programs and their important function in a completely different way than most Canadians. While most people think of the social safety net as something that catches us and saves us when we fall off the high wire of life the minister has referred to it as a fishing net that traps those in the net in a cycle of dependency.

When he appeared before the legislative committee on Bill C-113 the minister of employment told us an anecdote about people in his riding who work in a sawmill and would quit to go hunting. These people coerced the mill owner to write false records of employment because they knew that he needed them more than they needed him. The minister's disgust and frustration with these people was apparent.

It is clear that those are the kinds of people who fuel his pursuit against voluntary quitters, people who laugh at the system because they know that when push comes to shove they can survive in the underground economy selling firewood, working under the table, or living off

what they hunt during the winter. That is not the reality of most Canadians. Most people are completely dependent on their salaries, and if they lose their job it is not a question of making a slight adjustment in life-style, they are completely devastated.

The minister is indifferent to that larger reality. All he sees is those people who thumb their noses at the system, and it makes his blood boil. Later in his presentation to the legislative committee the minister made a very revealing admission. We were talking about how these changes really just tinkered with the system, tinkered on the sidelines. The minister admitted that it is just tinkering. Then he said that if it were only him, and he stopped for a second as if catching himself, and then went on to say it would be much more comprehensive UI reform that would be undertaken because we need it.

• (1630 )

It is a shame that the minister held back because I would have been interested in knowing what he would like to do with the UI program. I have often urged this government to present a plan to Canadians because we desperately need a vision to lead us into the next century.

I think that as a society we must re-evaluate old beliefs and find new ways to cope with the new reality. We see that the debt and the deficit are beginning to interest Canadians and I think this is a very positive development.

I am anxious to see how the government tries to explain its lackluster performance in these two areas and possibly the UI system is another area which deserves to be re-examined.

The minister seems to believe so, even though he hesitates about what changes he might like to make.

I say to the minister that if he has a plan for comprehensive UI reform, then he should present it to the House because the bill now before this House is a dismal failure. If the UI act needs to be reformed, then that is a debate which should take place immediately. Canadians need help in preparing for the new world economy and if UI reform is to be part of that help then let the government put a reform proposal before the Canadian people so they can judge whether or not the proposal is worth while.