

ment. The bill is not bad by accident or because the government does not know better. The government is proceeding deliberately, and it is refusing to consider reforms which, first, would save the people of Canada more money; second, would be much more just to Canadians across the country; third, would create much more incentive to work among Canadians; and finally, would be much less complicated than this bill.

There are two essential differences between the two serious parties in this House on questions relating to unemployment insurance legislation. The first is that the government pretends that every unemployed Canadian is the same. By contrast, we recognize that hardship is much greater for those unemployed Canadians who have dependants for whom they have to care, and we recognize also that abuse has been much greater among those Canadians who do not have dependants for whom they have to care. The other difference is that the government's proposal is very complicated. It establishes different standards based upon different regions of the country.

[*Translation*]

We heard the other night the hon. member for Charlevoix (Mr. Lapointe) who referred to the problems caused in his own riding by an artificial line drawn by this government. There are now in the riding of Charlevoix and many other ridings in the province of Quebec small villages on one side of the Saguenay river with a standard and other small villages on the other side of the river with a different standard. So this is a double-standard government.

● (1542)

[*English*]

It is absolutely unacceptable to us to have this kind of situation brought in by this government, creating confusion and complexity where none needs to be. We would base the distinction which must be brought into this bill on whether or not an unemployed Canadian has to support other persons. The government, in contrast, bases its distinction on whether the unemployed live in Canada, on what side of the Saguenay they are. If they are on one side of the Saguenay river, they are treated one way; if, by sheer chance, they happen to be on the other side, they are treated another way.

That is absolutely absurd. It is bureaucratic nonsense imposed in a way that is guaranteed to create injustice in this country, and yet that is precisely what this government is proposing. They are proposing it despite the fact there is a better way, because they know there is before the House of Commons right now amendment No. 14 proposed by my colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, which is a much better approach which will not create the problems which are being created by the government's own proposal.

The government's stubbornness is costing hundreds and probably thousands of Canadians simple equality and justice of treatment. It does not care about the people who suffer from the double standard, the people who, because they happen to live on one side of the Saguenay and not on the other, will be treated differently from their cousins or neighbours. It prefers to persist in its stubbornness and push through a bad bill rather than accept amendments which would make it better.

Unemployment Insurance Act

Our proposal, which has been outlined effectively by other members of the House, establishes that persons with dependants would continue to be covered for two-thirds of earnings for which they are now insured. We do that for a reason—because these are the Canadians who most need help in our system. It stands to reason that they need help most because they have more other Canadians to care for. Also, they are the Canadians who are least mobile. If you have dependants, it is not as easy to move to other places where you might find work as it is if you do not have dependants. These are people who have special cause for the attention and concern of their government, but their special requirements are absolutely ignored by this government.

Instead of dealing with people who have particular problems, this government has set up a little artificial group of districts in the country. It imposes a geographical complexity which ensures vested injustice being dealt to a large number of Canadians. We are proposing in the amendment introduced by my colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, a two-tier system. It would introduce a second category of benefits based upon the principle that those Canadians who do not have dependants under the Income Tax Act will be covered for only 50 per cent of their earnings.

It has been made very clear by members on this side that we are also proposing, as part of the amendment put forward by the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, that we will vest in a married couple the right to decide and establish themselves which one of the couple will be the one to whom dependants are attached. Because the law as it now stands involves a serious discrimination against women, and we propose a means by which that can be mitigated. That too this government have turned down. They would prefer to live with discrimination against women than to remove it as it exists in this bill.

The proposal for the two-tier system which we introduced would save, by the government's own reckoning, in the neighbourhood of \$850 million. Their proposal, by their reckoning, would save in the neighbourhood of \$935 million. But—and the buts are pretty important—it would add at least \$43 million to the welfare costs of the provinces and Lord knows how much to the welfare costs of the municipalities across this country. It is unfortunately far too typical of the restraint that pretends to be practised by this government. They are not reducing over-all expenditure; they are simply making some paper cuts and passing the real burden on to other levels of government which cannot afford to bear them as well as the Government of Canada can.

I see the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Maine), who represents an Ontario constituency, shaking his head negatively.

Mr. Maine: Your facts are all wrong.

Mr. Clark: Unfortunately, he reflects the same kind of attitude of indifference toward Atlantic Canada that was reflected by his colleague who is here in the House, the