

Government Orders

In the 1988 election campaign in which everybody sitting in this House participated—it has been said many times, but it is a necessary prelude to what I have to say—the St. John's *Evening Telegram* on October 14, 1988 quoted the hon. Minister for International Trade as stating: "No one is planning any changes in the unemployment insurance program. There has not been any change proposed to us since we dealt with the Forget Commission and we are not contemplating any changes now".

Almost six months to the day after this promise was made, in disbelief I sat in this very seat and watched as the Minister of Employment and Immigration made proposals for a drastic overhaul of the unemployment insurance system. I had assured my people that a promise had been made, and I did not expect any changes. You can imagine, Mr. Speaker, my disappointment, surprise, and disbelief as I watched this being unfolded.

We were again surprised and disappointed at what we heard. We heard that \$1.3 billion would be cut from unemployment insurance benefits. This represents about 10 per cent of the \$13 billion annual unemployment insurance payments that the report stated would cut off around 30,000 Canadians of the 3 million Canadians who are receiving unemployment insurance benefits and represented, according to the studies that were done by the government, around \$30 million to Newfoundland.

I think I am quoting Benjamin Disraeli who said there are three kinds of lies: "lies, damn lies, and statistics". The hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce mentioned statistics in the vicinity of \$83 million for Newfoundland.

I am in possession of a report from the Government of Newfoundland which had a separate study done, and it reckoned that the total impact is going to be \$112 million. That is quite different. What the impact is going to be will depend on what assumptions are made. Mr. Speaker, you can appreciate that I have to take the worst case not for political reasons but to concern myself with what could happen.

The hon. member for Burlington in a statement dismissed the impact it would have. In fact government stated that the impact would be marginal in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador owing to the high rate of unemployment.

Let me quote the impact it is going to have, and I have not made these up in my mind. A statistical survey was done using the social policy simulation data base, which is a microcomputer based model developed by Statistics Canada. The indications are that up to 11,000 in Newfoundland may be impacted by the new entrance requirements alone; up to 30,000 by the change in duration; and up to 6,000 by the voluntary quit measures. If that is a marginal impact, I am not standing on the floor of the House of Commons today giving a presentation on Bill C-21.

The government will say: "But you do not understand". It will argue that \$800 million of these benefits will be redirected into job training programs. I think this is unfair to rural Canada for two reasons: first, it is paying for job development programs out of the unemployment insurance pool.

This point has already been made by one of my colleagues, and it is unfair to the people who can least afford it. Right now, of the \$13 billion annual cost of unemployment insurance, 43 per cent is funded by employers, 31 per cent by worker contribution, and 26 per cent by the government.

Then I look at the job training. Yes, I am in favour of job training, but how does it apply to my riding? Let me give you some examples, Mr. Speaker.

I have analysed with my staff and with members of my riding the designated skill shortages in Newfoundland. There are 50 job titles, and right now around 1,200 jobs. I am not going to bore the House with a great dissertation on this point, but I have to look at some of the titles.

This title is "fish plant manager", maximum training volume 50. Every fish plant in my riding has a manager as far as I know and to my knowledge the government is closing them down, not opening them up. The ones that are open are still only operating at a 55 per cent capacity.

I will give another example. This title is "claims staker soil sampler", 30. I do not have many mines in my riding, but there is a project in my riding to get a mine under way in an area where employment is desperately needed. The entrepreneurial skill is there. The professional and the organizational expertise are there. The whole thing has been staffed, the business plan is available, but ACOA says no.