

Government Orders

The funds for training our unemployed people come out of the fund. A lot of money comes out of the fund. Administration costs come entirely out of the fund. Training comes out of the fund. Everything pertaining to the unemployed comes out of the fund. The government withdrew funding to the UI with the introduction of Bill C-21 in 1990. The government does not contribute to the UI fund any more but it still wants to regulate the fund and it still wants to control it.

Mr. Heap: They also cut out its own training programs.

Mr. Samson: I would like to go on for about another hour frankly, because I have tons of material that I can go through to speak against this bill. It is a Draconian bill.

I would like to conclude by saying that the attack on the unemployed which is created as a result of the economic policies of this government is not the answer to the problems of the unemployed.

The minister started out by arguing that we have to get rid of these frauds. Nobody in my office who commits fraud gets support from me, none. If they cheated the system by working while they collected unemployment insurance and there was a penalty to pay, fine, let us address that. If we are talking about penalizing the unemployed people for quitting their jobs, I am sorry. Let us make the penalty fit the crime. Let us not put people in jail for the rest of their lives for stealing a chocolate bar.

There is nothing wrong with the penalty that exists today. People are penalized now for quitting their jobs up to 14 weeks, the two-week waiting period, plus their benefits are cut by 50 per cent. That is penalty enough. That is deterrent enough. I feel this bill is Draconian. It goes far over to the right, and it should be defeated.

Hon. John McDermid (Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Madam Speaker, I have one question for my hon. friend from Timmins who has made some very interesting policy pronouncements from time to time.

I want to ask him one question. Does he think it is right that an individual who quits his or her job for no good reason should collect insurance, which is designed for people, who through no fault of their own, need it to carry them over a period of time until they find another job?

Does he think the people, the union workers who are paying these unemployment insurance fees and stick with their jobs, should support those who quit voluntarily to sit at home and not work? Does he support that? I want a yes or no answer on that.

Does he also support the premise that the person who sets his car on fire or sets his house on fire should collect insurance on it?

An hon. member: It is arson.

Mr. McDermid: It is the same principle.

• (1150)

Mr. Samson: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for that question. When this minister starts answering our questions with a yes or no, I will answer his with a yes or no.

In the meantime I am going to tell him this. We must not lose sight of the fact that this is unemployment insurance and it is for people who are unemployed. Yes, people are unemployed. A penalty now exists for people who quit their jobs and that penalty is a two-week waiting period, a 7 to 12 week penalty period, plus a reduction of 50 per cent in their benefits.

At the end of the 14-week period they must prove to the agent they are ready, willing and actively seeking employment. If they fail to do that they get zero. I challenge the minister to tell me that it is not penalty enough to deter people from quitting their jobs without just cause.

People who set their houses on fire, who burn their vehicles, are committing arson, and there is a penalty under the law. Do they get life imprisonment? No. Do they have to pay a fine? Do they lose their residence? Do they lose their insurance? Yes they do. That is penalty enough.

However, it is not good enough for the unemployed, not according to this minister. The unemployed? No, no. It has to be worse than that. We have to cut them off. We have to make them starve. We have to send them on to the welfare rolls of the provinces and in Quebec they do not even have welfare. They cannot apply for it. They have to get a loan that has to be repaid in Quebec. They do not get welfare. That is what you are sentencing these people to with this legislation.