

Supply

move on this program. The Conservatives are just taking this to its logical conclusion. That is the scene we have.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Champagne): Questions or comments? Debate.

Mr. George S. Baker (Gander—Grand Falls): Madam Speaker, I was going to ask the hon. gentleman a question, but after the remark he made about the Liberals at the end of his speech, I decided I would not ask him a question.

The parliamentary secretary and the minister made the point here in the Chamber today that they have heard from all of these organizations, the unions, business groups, anti-poverty organizations, churches, and so on. They wondered why should they have any more hearings, everyone has been heard from. The problem I have with this bill is that the very people affected by the legislation have not been heard from at all.

I have here a list of places in Newfoundland that are affected by the legislation. The hon. member for St. John's East is going to speak in a few moments. I will be very interested to hear what he has to say as it relates to his riding. For example, what do the people in Flat Rock think of this legislation? What do the people in Bear Cove, Blow Me Down, Broad Cove, Goose Cove, Frogmarsh, Lady Cove, Hibbs Cove, Kettle Cove or Nicky's Nose Cove think of the legislation? These are the people who are affected by the legislation.

• (1640)

I must admit that it is sometimes frustrating to sit in the Chamber and listen to the parliamentary secretary make the remark he made a few moments ago. He said: "There is lots of opportunity in a particular province. They just won't take advantage of it."

I have never ever met a person who wanted to be on unemployment insurance. You may think that there are people who would like to be on unemployment insurance but I have never met a person, not in all the years I have been here, not in all the cases I have handled before the judges, have I ever met one person who wanted to be on unemployment insurance. Why? Because, Madam Speaker, do you know how much they get? An average cheque in Canada today is \$210 a week. The average cheque in my province of Newfoundland is \$195 a week. You would have to be crazy. You belong in a mental

institution if you wanted to sit at home and get just \$195 a week and by law have to report your earnings beyond 25 per cent more than that.

There is a fallacy and misconception out there by people who say: "Look, somebody just wants to stay at home and they want to remain on unemployment insurance". There is no such person, unless the person perhaps has a physical or mental problem that means they just have to, but Canadians do not want to sit at home and make that kind of money.

What is wrong with the bill? I just said it is the people whom it affects. I took a map of Newfoundland out a few moments ago. I took the places in the new zones affected by the legislation. Do not forget that the new legislation says that if the unemployment rate is 15 per cent or less then you require more than 10 weeks to qualify. At this very moment, if the unemployment rate is less than 11.5 per cent in Newfoundland, you require more than 10 weeks to qualify. So that is quite a difference from 11.5 to 15 per cent. Now, all of a sudden, it becomes serious because under this legislation the government has re-drawn lines. It drew a line around the hon. member's riding opposite. Then the government drew a line right up through Newfoundland almost following the railway track—we used to have a railway track, but the railway is gone. The expression used to be "which side of the track do you live on?" Now it is "which side of the line do you live on?"

Mr. Reid: In 1968 I think the railway went, didn't it?

Mr. Baker: The government has taken the cities, the metropolitan area that has supposedly lower unemployment than the other areas and defined that as an area. Then in the province of Newfoundland they have taken the fairly, relatively speaking, well-off areas like Gander, Grand Falls, Corner Brook and made them into a zone south of the railway, and what do you have? All of a sudden, if you live in Paradise, you would require more to qualify for unemployment insurance than if you lived in Gallow's Cove, for example. If you live in Petty Harbour, you are going to require more to qualify for unemployment insurance than if you live in Bay Bulls.

The hon. member for St. John's East made the point a moment ago when he said: "Look, my area of Newfoundland has been fluctuating between 10 and 16 weeks because the unemployment rate has dipped above and below 11.5 per cent on the entire Avalon Peninsula." If