

the unemployed think of the UIC as a source of funds where they often get much more.

Mr. Speaker, we must indeed recognize that there is some basic imbalance when someone who worked for eight weeks can get UIC benefits for up to 50 weeks. Admittedly he may not be responsible for his problem in a number of cases, and society must help him. However I feel that puts quite a burden on the worker, the regularly employed, those who have to pay taxes and consider the situation as somewhat bizarre. They blame us as legislators for finding easy ways out, giving away the money we collect and telling people: Listen, we give you money, but finding jobs is too difficult. I submit the tougher alternative, the one we chose, is our commitment to create jobs. This is not easy because we have programs such as Canada Works, Young Canada Works, the LIP program. The latter has been criticized by some, but to me it is essential and must not only be maintained but increased. The money we will be able to redirect should go to make job programs in slow growth areas such as ours.

So in my view the approach we are considering, however belatedly as I said, appears to be the best. I recognize it is the most difficult and the unemployed may have some difficulty in accepting those four extra weeks, but there is nothing to prevent us from trying. Nothing prevents us from seeing how this legislation will work. There is nothing to prevent us later on from making representations to ministers if we were to find that those four weeks taken away from the unemployed caused irreparable loss, that the unemployed could not indeed find another job, and that he was in a worse situation because this legislation had been enacted. I am not saying at all, Mr. Speaker, that we should absolutely accept this law and enforce it until the end of this parliament. We are here to pass laws and introduce the necessary changes when we realize that they fall short of the aim we had in mind when we enacted them. That is why we are here. If statistics can prove to me that this law is prejudicial to people in financial need, I would be the first one to rise in the House and say: This law, Mr. Minister, does not meet our objectives. Don't listen to the bureaucrats who are saying that it should be amended. As for me, Mr. Speaker, I see this bill as a sincere and real effort by the Minister of Manpower to reintegrate these people on the labour market, to give them some motivation and a sense of work I hope they will be able to recover.

The solution proposed by the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Cullen) when he speaks about work sharing projects is quite original, Mr. Speaker, because workers often tell us: You are not listening to the unemployed. Find an answer to their problem, find them work! And today, in this new legislation we are saying to the worker: You work 40 hours a week, you are protected by your union, by various considerations; you are a good employee, the employer will keep you on a 40 hour basis. Due to economic circumstances, the employer is compelled to lay off a number of workers and he will ask those who work to share with others, instead of working 40 hours a week, they will work only 30 hours and

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receive unemployment insurance benefits as a compensatory measure.

Mr. Speaker, this is true socialism which I accept. He who asks those who have more to share with those who have less instead of urging the government to spend the money it has levied from taxpayers or at least who does not rely only on the government to find a solution. I have confidence that the worker will realize that he will be able to help his unemployed workmate and find a solution to his problem. At any rate, this solution seems original to me and I think it is desirable to give it a try.

Mr. Speaker, there is also in this legislation a nonsense, if I may use that word, which will finally be eliminated. During the extended period of unemployment insurance, those who had the guts and the wit to work during four weeks were rewarded by forfeiting all unemployment insurance benefits. This was in my view a most stupid and unacceptable reward since it encouraged those who worked not to do it because they were penalized for so doing. Mr. Speaker, this amendment which would remove the penalty for those who are working for four weeks will certainly be approved unanimously by all hon. members of this House.

However, Mr. Speaker, I suggest this bill is an important step, a retreat from the unemployment insurance legislation which we passed, perhaps too quickly, in 1971. I have the impression and I hope that it will establish a new balance between the worker and the unemployed and that the integration of unemployment and manpower will enable our society to benefit more from the government services which are now available and sometimes badly used.

For my part, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this bill deserves some loyal effort on our part, and I must say to those of my colleagues who have some reservations concerning the increase in the number of weeks from eight to twelve that I will be very happy to listen to their arguments in the committee, and if they have acceptable compromise suggestions to solve this problem, which seems to be perhaps the most controversial aspect of the bill, I am not saying that I will not be prepared to consider them. However, I believe that we must together look for solutions, that we shall find them and that this bill will, at least I hope so, help the population, but most importantly, that it will help find employment for the Canadians who need it, who deserve it as much as those in large centres, and I appeal to the government to find, in the short term, solutions such as Canada Works, for which the budget should be increased because, whatever some people may say, whatever the abuses that we know and deplore, those programs are really useful to the community since they bring a certain well-being to the community and, most important, give back to certain people the incentive to work before finding the permanent employment that they would like to find and that I hope we will be able to offer them as soon as possible.

[English]

Mr. William Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand): Mr. Speaker, it is a special pleasure for me to take part in the debate on this bill to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act. I say that