

weeks of insured earnings. Meanwhile, workers in Alberta must work 14 weeks to qualify for only 14 weeks of benefits. The task force cited this disparity as an incentive for Newfoundlanders to set up a cycle of dependency, implying they will work only long enough to establish a new claim. That is a rather slanderous thing to say about the workers of Canada. Even in Newfoundland, where unemployment is higher than in most of the country, only 12 per cent of claimants exhausted their claim in 1979.

May I call it one o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

[Translation]

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this afternoon.

At 1 p.m. the House took recess.

#### AFTER RECESS

[English]

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

**Mr. Sargeant:** Mr. Speaker, before one o'clock I was speaking about the unemployment insurance task force report of last year and how it had unfairly singled out Newfoundland workers as an example of how people become dependent upon unemployment insurance, at least dependent in the definition of this government. The task force ignored the fact that the Atlantic region has a higher proportion of repeat claims because job opportunities in that region are often seasonal or non-existent. How can this government seriously consider the findings of a task force that is so blatantly bent on blaming the victims?

I think it is clear, as in all other changes to the unemployment insurance program introduced since 1971, that the reason for recommending longer entrance requirements and shorter benefit periods is to cut government costs for this program. In addition to that, in a cynical move to encourage labour migration to the site of the government's ill-fated megaprojects, the task force recommendations sought to force workers to move to the west where the jobs were expected to be.

• (1410)

According to the provisions recommended in last year's UI task force, the regional rate of unemployment would still be used to determine the benefit period of unemployment insurance claimants. The benefit period would vary across the country from 20 weeks where unemployment was less than 6 per cent, up to a maximum of 50 weeks. However, claimants in areas hardest hit by unemployment could by no means be guaranteed 50 weeks of benefits. The maximum benefit period would vary from 20 to 40 weeks in most cases. It would only be those people who were fortunate enough to hold a job for a full 35 weeks prior to their claim who could possibly qualify for a longer benefit period than the 40 weeks.

#### *Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971 (No. 2)*

The task force says that these changes are necessary to reinforce work incentives and to take people's labour force patterns toward work and away from unemployment insurance. The people of Canada have been told by the minister's task force that they did not really want to work, that they were inclined to live off unemployment insurance rather than work. I reject that accusation, which is what it is. It is an accusation that the working people of Canada are lazy and need to be prodded by their government to contribute to the general well-being of this country. What kind of Victorian moralizing is that?

Even in Newfoundland where it is more difficult to find work than in many other parts of this country, only 12 per cent of unemployment claimants stay on unemployment insurance until they are cut off. This would suggest to me that the people of Newfoundland, and all other Canadians, do indeed want to work. This government has taken away their right to work by its ruinous economic policies and it is now blaming them for being unemployed.

Traditionally, there have been four categories of unemployment; seasonal, frictional, cyclical and structural. It is now apparent that the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) and his UI analysts would have us believe that there is one very important category of unemployment that has been ignored in the past, and that is intentional unemployment.

For the record, we in the New Democratic Party reject the accusation that the working people of Canada are lazy and need to be prodded by the government from collecting unemployment insurance and made to work. In the worst kind of cynicism—Liberal cynicism—this government throws thousands of Canadians out of work with its tight monetary and fiscal policies and then blames them for being unemployed or for living in one of the high unemployment regions of the country.

According to the unemployment insurance task force, tightening up UI regulations and further restricting the extent of UI claims will cut \$220 million off the government unemployment insurance bill.

Canadian workers can breathe a bit easier, at least for now, because the Minister of Employment and Immigration has decided that it is advisable to maintain the status quo on unemployment insurance entrance requirements for at least one more year. They can breathe easier because what the minister apparently has up his sleeve is much worse than what is in effect now.

It is valuable at this time to recall what the hon. member for Lincoln, the author of the 1971 unemployment insurance legislation, had to say about the series of amendments to that legislation throughout the 1970s. I quote the hon. member:

—since 1971 when the Unemployment Insurance Act was brought in, reflecting the views of all members of the House, there have been no less than five or six amendments to the bill, if I recall correctly. In each and every one of these amendments there has been a clause or provision, among others, subtly to shift