

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear.

[Translation]

Hon. Eymard G. Corbin: Honourable senators, I was not going to speak, but I will explain why I changed my mind. The minister who proposed the amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act is the Honourable Bernard Valcourt, who represents the riding I had the honour to represent in the House of Commons for 16 years, from 1968 to 1984. During that time, I received many requests from unemployment insurance claimants to help them with their claims.

Madawaska-Victoria is a federal riding where the job supply and demand fluctuates considerably. We have fairly high seasonal employment, because of the type of industry in this part of Northwest New Brunswick which is quite similar to what we find next door in Quebec, in Témiscouata, for instance: Both regions are very dependent on the forestry industry. Both also have a strong farming sector, although maybe more so in New Brunswick. The service sector in Madawaska-Victoria is a major wage producer. The railway sector — or what is left of it, since this government is bent on deep-sixing railways in this country — is also a major employer.

Hundreds of thousands of people literally depend on the forestry industry. There is more to it than pulp and paper plants. The wood is first processed in these plants and there is logging and, of course, the transportation sector.

Spring is tree planting time. In fact, this is a sector where a great New Brunswicker called Kenneth C. Irving, who died last year, was an innovator. The modern approach to forestry regeneration was first introduced in the riding of Madawaska-Victoria, on the Irving company's land. People who work in this sector are restricted by the weather. You can't plant trees in winter when the ground is frozen six, seven or eight feet deep. That is pretty obvious. However, the people who plant trees do not necessarily find other kinds of work during the rest of the year.

There are also in the riding of Madawaska-Victoria, in the agricultural sector, the large McCain Food factories that employ a great many seasonal workers. Those are not people who go vacationing in winter in Florida, the Bahamas, Bermuda or Hawaii. Those are people who work shifts, over the weekend or at night, and do not always have a job twelve months a year; on the contrary.

During all the time I was a Member of Parliament, I seldom saw cases of UI abuse. I say seldom because there were a few cases. I am not sure Minister Valcourt has been in Madawaska-Victoria to make the same speech he made here in Ottawa or in front of the Press Club. At least I have not heard of that. The local media did not report it if he went to tell people of Madawaska-Victoria the same things he said

here in the House of Commons, at the entrance of the House of Commons or on the stairways of Parliament. I do not know.

But there is one thing I know, and that is there are a great many unemployed people in Madawaska-Victoria. Those unemployed people elected me five times in a row, each time with an increased majority, because in the Trudeau years we took care of the unemployed. We were taking care of the jobless and their families.

Nobody was claiming back in those days that people were using their benefits to go on a ski trip in the Rockies. That is fiction, some new thing the minister responsible has made up. I am amazed and surprised that a minister from an area that is neither poor nor rich would say such a thing. After all, Madawaska-Victoria is hardly the industrial heartland of the country. It is not where 10 new jobs are created every day. It is an area that actually depends on programs such as the UI program.

I would have felt ashamed if I did not rise today to oppose this plan. I could not have faced my former constituents to tell them that, when given the opportunity to speak against this government bill in the Senate, I remained seated. That is why I rose today, and I did so with no partisan intent. Minister Valcourt would be the first to admit that I have never been one to stick my nose in his business. He was also elected to uphold legislation that is necessary for the workers in his area. This time, however, I felt the need to put in a word. And that is that Mr. Valcourt should not go about it this way, and I want my constituents to know that I do not support this legislation and that, every chance I get, I will be speaking against this initiative of Mr. Valcourt because I find it inhuman.

I know what I am talking about because I am thoroughly familiar with my region. I know those families who have to make enormous sacrifices just to give an education to their children, for instance. They have to send them away to get the training required to set up in business or land a good job.

Therefore, I find it most distressing when government now plans to use its guillotine tactics to ram this bill through. I listened to Senator Bolduc's speech last night. He did not write that speech. It was obvious that it had been written for Mr. Valcourt. It addressed strictly regional issues relating to Atlantic Canada. It had obviously been written for Mr. Valcourt.

Senator Bolduc gave it here in the Senate, but he did not convince me. I do not hold it against him. He is a loyal servant of the Progressive Conservative Party. He is doing his job. He does his work as a Tory senator, but has Senator Bolduc ever met with poor workers? Has Senator Bolduc ever received unemployment insurance benefits?

Believe it or not, I must admit that I myself once took advantage of unemployment insurance for a very short period of time when I was young. My appointment to the Senate was