

Employment and Immigration

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West) moved motion No. 16:

That Bill C-27, an act to establish the Department of Employment and Immigration, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971 and to amend certain other statutes in consequence thereof, be amended in clause 41, by striking out lines 35 to 43 at page 19 and lines 1 to 47 at page 20.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre) (for Mr. Leggatt) moved motion No. 17:

That Bill C-27, an act to establish the Department of Employment and Immigration, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971 and to amend certain other statutes in consequence thereof, be amended in clause 41 by striking out lines 35 to 43 at page 19, lines 1 to 47 at page 20, lines 1 to 42 at page 21, lines 1 to 42 at page 22, lines 1 to 45 at page 23 and lines 1 to 6 at page 24.

Mr. Lincoln M. Alexander (Hamilton West) moved motion No. 18:

That Bill C-27, an act to establish the Department of Employment and Immigration, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971 and to amend certain other statutes in consequence thereof, be amended in clause 41 by adding immediately after line 32 at page 22, the following new subclause:

"(12) provided that within one year from the proclamation of this act, the minister shall cause to be laid before parliament by way of ministerial statement, a definitive evaluation report on the said job creation proposal".

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Dionne (Northumberland-Miramichi): Dispense.

Mr. Rodriguez: I notice that there has been a shift in the seating arrangements across the floor. I think by now the minister and the House are well aware that we object to changing the extended benefit period, in line with the proposals of the minister with regard to establishing 54 regions across the country and setting the length of the benefit period and regional rates in line with that kind of national plan. We object to it because it discriminates against certain regions of the country. Atlantic Canada and especially Newfoundland have staggering rates of unemployment. It seems to me that it does not matter whether a person is unemployed in Toronto or in St. John's, Newfoundland. The effects are the same; they are just as deadly and debilitating. Studies on the unemployed have been carried out in the United States and it has been found that suicide, wife beating, child beating and other offences tend to be numerous among people who are unemployed or who may have a history of long unemployment.

In the debates on these various motions we have pointed out the effects this bill will have on the regions of the country. My riding is in region 21. While the region may have a 6.1 per cent or 6.4 per cent unemployment rate, there are pockets within that region which suffer from devastatingly high rates of unemployment. If the minister is interested in cracking down on people who abuse the unemployment insurance fund, the most effective way of doing that is to enforce the act more effectively than is being done at the moment.

[Mr. Symes.]

If jobs are available in Atlantic Canada, as pointed out in the study of the Atlantic region carried out by Canada Manpower, in which it stated there are many jobs available, and just a few operations which could not provide at least eight weeks of work, why are the unemployed not being referred to those jobs which are supposed to be available? In January, when we were in St. John's to study unemployment, we went to the Manpower centres and discovered that there were very few jobs posted. We understood that when a job came to the attention of the Manpower office there, it was posted on a bulletin board. The unemployed could go to that board and pick a job in which they were interested or for which they felt they were qualified.

On the day we were there, two jobs were posted on that board. We found that the unemployed in St. John's were trained or retrained, as the case may be. We found that women were being trained to be hairdressers. The hairdressing course was a very popular one. Women were being put on that course, and we found that there were more hairdressers on the market than there were heads to be tended.

I discovered that the same thing was true in my own riding. In my riding, a favourite course is the stationary engineering course. Everybody was being trained to be a stationary engineer. Before we knew it, we had more third-class stationary engineers than we had engines and motors to be stationary engineered! Therefore, we have consistently said that one of the most effective ways to enforce the Unemployment Insurance Act and to eliminate abuses would be to direct unemployed people to the jobs that are available. We have long argued that that is one of the most effective roles in which the Unemployment Insurance Commission and Canada Manpower could cooperate.

• (1650)

Unfortunately, they have developed a system in my riding whereby the Manpower centre is downtown Sudbury and the unemployment insurance office is five miles away in the suburbs. There is no bus service, and it is isolated from any attempt to refer to jobs those who are registered for unemployment insurance and are collecting benefits. We have consistently argued that this is what the visit to the Canada Manpower centre ought to be for, to refer the claimant to a job. If the claimant refuses the job, then a decision is made based on that choice, and from there on there could be a decision on whether it was a justifiable refusal. But we are not doing that. This whole operation is designed to get people off the unemployment insurance rolls, no matter whether jobs are provided or anything is done to stimulate job opportunity.

The hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne) earlier talked about what a great job this government was doing in creating employment. But this is the same government that eliminated the Opportunities for Youth program and last year cut back on LIP. They claim to be saving \$135 million through the changes to this act, but what are they doing with the money? I have grave doubts about whether replacing LIP with Canada Works is a step up the ladder.