

easily for unemployment insurance. They do not make as much money and they do not as easily qualify for unemployment insurance. As well, many women work in fish plants all over the province, not because they want to but because they have to, and many of them will be affected by that decline in the inshore catch.

I am building on the argument made by my hon. friend that there is a lack of opportunity and of alternatives. The only thing the people have to fall back on is the unemployment insurance system. Does the Government have some sort of plan that will change the pattern of fish landings in the next 12 months? What happens after that 12-month period if that does not happen? Do we simply come back here and talk about the *status quo* again?

The *status quo* is not good enough. Let me describe some specific changes that should be made. Let us deal with fishermen on the Labrador coast, for example. At least fishermen on the coast of Newfoundland can draw unemployment insurance up until May 15. They begin drawing it on November 15. Bear in mind that in many areas, fish is not caught after October so fishermen have to go from some time in October to November 15 before they can begin to draw unemployment insurance. In most cases, benefits can be drawn up to May 15, but what happens to fishermen on the Labrador coast? The ice remains off the Labrador coast until some time in late June. From May 15 to late June, a six-week period, the fishermen on the Labrador coast have no income at all. They have no unemployment insurance benefits and no opportunities to catch fish, through no fault of their own. They cannot catch fish because the ice is in the bays. There are serious weaknesses in the existing program.

If we have any regard for human rights, fairness and equity whatsoever, specific changes should be made right now. I think we should go well beyond that and put in place the kind of system that was recommended by Forget and by commission after commission, some kind of income-support plan for fishermen. If we do not want to do it only for fishermen, let us go all the way and create a guaranteed annual income. Let us stop fooling around with a system that everyone feels they have to beat. The big game in town is how to beat the system. The system is bad and unfair so people must devise ways every day to beat an unfair system.

Why are we expending our energies, our creativity and our imagination in an attempt to beat a lousy system? Why do we not come up with a plan that would allow flexibility and creativity? If we want to do that, we should be looking specifically at a guaranteed income for fishermen as was recommended by Forget and the House report. In fact, let us go all the way and look at a guaranteed annual income. Let us stop all this nonsense about bilking an unwieldy and inflexible system of money that is owed to people, money they need and money they deserve if they are to have a decent life in Canada. It seems to me that the time has come for us to move in that direction.

#### *Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971*

There is no reason to do a song and dance about the Government suddenly agreeing in its wisdom to maintain the *status quo*. Let me return to the young people. A young person, one of those 50 per cent unemployed, must have not 10 weeks of employment but 20 weeks of employment in Newfoundland if he wants to get into the system now. In the short fishing season on the northeast Coast of Newfoundland or the coast of Labrador, where will he find 20 weeks in which to qualify for the system? Again, I make the point that the *status quo* is simply not good enough. Therefore, I cannot get excited about the Government, in its wisdom, agreeing to keep what is already there.

I think it is a comment on the kind of leadership we have that while the Government is telling Canadians that it wants, through the free trade deal, to give Canadians opportunities for job creation, for hundreds of thousands of new jobs, and it wants, through Meech Lake, to give Canadians equality in Canada, it is saying to the people in Newfoundland that they must be content with the *status quo* for 12 months. There are no brave words, no imaginative ideas, no plans for revitalizing the inshore fishery in Newfoundland, simply the *status quo* for 12 months. That is not good enough.

• (1230)

Hundreds and thousands of people are in grave danger at this time. We have a generation of workers in certain areas of Newfoundland in danger of ceasing to work at all. I really have very grave concerns about the future of the inshore fishery in my province. That industry supports not only a lot of fishermen and plant workers, but a lot of communities. Let the Government come forward with a plan to save not only a dying industry and those fishermen and plant workers but whole communities which are in jeopardy at this time.

**Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a few words about this legislation. The two Members who spoke before me really set the pattern in articulating what needs to be said about the variable entrance requirement. I guess what we first need to say is what it is and then what it says about the kind of Government we have.

In certain regions of this country with significantly higher levels of unemployment people can qualify for unemployment insurance in a shorter period of time than those in other areas. That is only just and we in this Party support the extension of this provision in the Act.

We also must remind ourselves that the reason we have a variable entrance requirement is because a Liberal Government decided to get tough on unemployment insurance. It decided that the qualifying period was too short and it was going to lengthen it. It wanted to make it much more difficult for all Canadians to obtain unemployment insurance. It was only because of a significant rump in the Liberal Party that opposed this move, as well as other Opposition objections, that the Liberal Government of the day backed away. A compromise solution was found, that most Canadians would have to