

to the local UI office in Rivière-du-Loup would give them the actual figures and if they have to go by samples, let them at least go in areas of high unemployment and take that as a sample, in order to do justice to workers and the unemployed.

In terms of areas, I do not think a Ph.D. in geography is needed to understand that Grand Portage is part of the Lower St. Lawrence area and the Gaspé Peninsula. But I do not see why they go on using areas that do not truly reflect the local and regional situation, thereby diluting the high unemployment rate in underprivileged areas with the rates of others that are better off. This creates a double injustice because it means that in terms of statistics the worst off areas are giving points to more prosperous ones, subsidizing them both with UI benefits and with public funds under the job-creation programs, including the Canada Works projects. The most in need are paying for the rich. That kind of nonsense must stop. It must be corrected.

One does not have to be a wizard in order to find a solution to the problem of one area reflecting on the other. Let the make-up of one area reflect on another. This is what we say: Let us determine the true unemployment rate of each one, and this will put an end to cross-subsidization. This way the areas with real needs will be treated justly.

Of course the frustration of members of Parliament has been widely shared by the unemployed themselves, who established a regional common front including the following groups: Comité le réveil du transcontinental; the Kamouraska East committee against unemployment problems; Kamouraska Action Committee; Operation Dignity II; Rivière-du-Loup Unemployment Action; JAL and Basques workers and unemployed groups.

I should like to read parts of a letter that was sent on June 11 to the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy):

The regional common front against the designation of unemployment insurance area of Kamouraska-Rivière-du-Loup, Témiscouata and part of Rimouski wants to remind you of its annoyance at the delayed announcement of changes to the present limits of economic areas for unemployment insurance purposes. The common front also wishes to repeat its claim regarding the designation of the area and indicate what makes other proposed solutions unacceptable to us.

We think it is important first to remind you of the effects that resulted from the designation of new areas following the passage of Bill C-14. Because of the many seasonal jobs and despite a very high unemployment rate, many workers were denied unemployment insurance benefits because they did not meet the new requirements attached to the integration of our area to that of Quebec. Such a situation has brought those workers very serious financial difficulties, insecurity and all those social and family problems that could entail. Those cuts in the right to unemployment insurance have led, of course, to a slowdown in regional economic activity through a reduction of the purchasing power of those unemployed workers.

Even this time of the year the new zoning is still having substantial effects. Some people have gone back to work but many of them were unable to do so due to the economic slowdown, particularly in the construction industry. Workers who could not accumulate enough weeks to qualify under the new zoning still find themselves in a very difficult position. The others who were able to get benefits are having their weeks of benefits greatly reduced in the supplementary phase and, in a lot of cases, are no longer entitled to them. So there you have a

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quick picture of the situation to show the urgency of amending the present unemployment insurance zoning.

What the regional common front (KRT plus part of Rimouski) has been asking for since the beginning, about a year now, is that the zone of Grand Portage (Kamouraska-Rivière-du-Loup-Témiscouata, part of Rimouski) be taken out of the Quebec City area and put in the Lower St. Lawrence-Gaspé area.

Several reasons have already been given in support of that request, the main one being that the regions of Kamouraska-Rivière-du-Loup-Témiscouata and part of Rimouski have a socioeconomic situation much more similar to the Lower St. Lawrence-Gaspé area than the Quebec City area. That claim can be readily verified if you take a look particularly at the number of unemployment insurance claimants, the number of unemployed workers registered with the Canada Employment Centre in relation to the population and the regional rate of unemployment.

Those representations resulted in commitments by no lesser people than the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and five or six ministers who committed themselves during the election campaign to correcting that situation. We have since had the task force report but that report is still based on data produced by Statistics Canada which I question and which do not reflect, far from it, the unemployment situation in the area. So I urge them to review their statistics and I urge the minister to put pressure on them so they will do a sampling in the area.

Since they want to use samplings, I would suggest to them and to the minister—the administration would be much simplified—and some will certainly say that according to the act, the figures of Statistics Canada must be used. I do not want to wait for amendments to the act before this problem is solved, but if the figures of Statistics Canada have to be used they should at least change their method of operation and communicate with the manpower centres. Officials in those centres are the ones who are really aware of the situation and who could give their due to the workers.

I know that the minister is also in communication with other members of the cabinet, especially from the Quebec area, to review this situation. In fact, this bill is valid if it aims at extending the application of the variable eligibility requirement, but we find it unacceptable if the problem of zone designation is not rectified because this would perpetuate an inequity. I therefore ask the minister and his cabinet colleagues to make every effort to correct this unacceptable situation, especially for an area where 95 per cent of the young people, whose education has been paid for by their parents and the region, have to go elsewhere to earn a living.

When we know the level of unemployment, and I repeat that it would never be tolerated anywhere else, I ask whether a rate of 40 per cent would be accepted in Winnipeg or Windsor. There would be a revolution! Does anyone think that we will accept such a situation because we live in a peripheral area and because people talk about the beauty of our region? Heaven knows that we are ready to work and heaven knows how many struggles there have been to develop our country. Yet, how many problems we still have and how many obstacles