

incentive to work. That leads me to say that I hope the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) will soon give a green light to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) and let that minister proceed with his plans for a guaranteed annual income. Most of those who advocate such a program think in terms of providing an incentive to those who are working to stay on the job by having some kind of a guarantee that makes it worth while for them to do so. It would take time to go into the details of that, and I shall not take that time now.

It seems to me that a good many people who are trying to get protection under the Unemployment Insurance Act would get better protection and would have more incentive under the kind of guaranteed income program which I believe that the Minister of National Health and Welfare would bring in if only he could get the green light from that ogre who sits on the front bench, the Minister of Finance.

[Translation]

**Mr. Eudore Allard (Rimouski):** Madam Speaker, it is my duty to rise today to discuss unemployment insurance which affects not only my constituents but all Canadian people.

Madam Speaker, the unemployment rate in Canada is high and constantly worsening in several fields, especially in forestry, fisheries, etc. The rate is alarming and the people are facing all kinds of problems most of which are resulting from this legislation now under consideration.

At various periods of the year, several industries for a reason or another temporarily close their doors; hundreds of employees are dismissed and must draw unemployment insurance benefits. They are then subjected to a waiting period which could also be called a two-week penalty for having involuntarily lost their job. Those persons must then wait three or four other weeks to draw their first cheque or their first benefit.

Madam Speaker, the fact that at a given time those people have to turn to that famous Unemployment Insurance Act to survive is really detrimental to them. Because they are unemployed does not mean that they are lazy: far from it. Often they are laid off for reasons over which they have no control, such as a shortage of work amongst others.

The Unemployment Insurance Act inflicts difficulties upon some people. I know people who feel shy about going to the unemployment insurance office, who would certainly prefer not having to do it. After a given time, taking into account the experience of the individual, he must look for a job to prove to the commission that he is still willing to work. That is not always easy. After having applied for many jobs, without success, in his former field of work, the beneficiary of unemployment insurance must apply for jobs in a related field and give the commission proof of his efforts. Interpretation of the word "related" is left to the discretion of the civil servants with the result that, in some cases, nursing assistants have been penalized for refusing to work as waitresses in restaurants or hotels. The same thing goes when it comes to interpreting the word area.

#### *Unemployment Insurance Act*

Madam Speaker, after mistakes by commission employees a great many people find themselves in the obligation of paying back amounts of money paid to them. Is it logical that people should be penalized for mistakes made by others? Is that not prejudicial to those people?

Madam Speaker, it is most important that the Unemployment Insurance Act be revised as well as its regulations that are now stricter than the act itself. Everything must be done to make that act fair and available; information concerning that act and its regulations must be made available to people in the same way it was and is still being done with the conversion of our measure system so people can understand that act and know exactly what is expected of them. We must stop hiding from them information that is later used to disqualify them.

We suggest, Madam Speaker, that the waiting period be abolished, that first payment be made within two weeks following the claim in order to allow people who file a sickness claim to get benefits notwithstanding the stage reached by their claim and the number of insurable weeks of employment accumulated. We also call for the abolition of the reimbursement of overpayments due to mistakes by the commission. We would also agree to have the number of insurable weeks of employment required to qualify for unemployment insurance increased from 8 to 12, which would avoid the possibility of fraud and would give justice to workers all year long, in addition to allowing people to prove their love for work.

I am convinced, Madam Speaker, that an improvement of the Unemployment Insurance Act is called for and that it will in no way be prejudicial to our economy and our development, and while implementing at the same time the guaranteed minimum income plan that my hon. friend from the New Democratic Party talked about so well earlier. However, I would remind him that the guaranteed minimum income has been advocated for many years by the Social Credit Party of Canada. We like to believe that the implementation of those measures would represent an improvement that would rather help give our society the assurance of becoming better.

● (1750)

[English]

**Mr. J. R. Ellis (Hastings):** Madam Speaker, the resolution that the hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand (Mr. Knowles) put forward speaks for itself. If I were given the next 50 or 60 minutes, I could probably do justice in support of it. In the very few minutes that we have left, however, I would like merely to make a few points which might help to clear up some of the misconceptions that the hon. member for Peel-Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Milne) has in mind. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) cleared up one with regard to the group that blocked the bill which was brought in early in the last parliament. At that time I think it is fair to say that the term commonly used about my colleagues to the left and members of the Liberal Party was that they were bed mates. Nevertheless, that bill was blocked, although we would have liked to have seen it and other legislation come into force.

As a matter of fact, to my recollection there have been at least three promises of amendments to be made to the