

House and given the privilege they have to come and see us, can tell us: Your laws disregard our rights.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that it is quite true. We have worked hard to try to soften up this act which is very restrictive toward those who for many years as I mentioned earlier have been entitled to unemployment insurance precisely because they contributed to it.

We are also giving to civil servants the power to do whatever they see fit, to look for all possible means to disqualify people who are still entitled to collect unemployment insurance benefits. Because of the laws enacted by this government, these very people are today coming to see us in our regional offices to seek explanations or obtain some assistance before the arbitration boards originally instituted a few years ago by the Department of Employment and Immigration to defend these same people. Today, because of an act which is unjust for these people, not only the members of the opposition but the members on the government side, now have to undertake to take up the cause of these same persons to make them eligible again precisely because of the difference which exists between each region, especially in regions such as ours and mine in particular. It is very difficult to tell these people that they have to go out and look for work.

Some years ago looking for a job was a fairly easy thing to do. There were great possibilities for persons collecting unemployment insurance to get themselves a job. However, today in 1978, these possibilities no longer exist. Why so? Precisely because of laws which are supposed to provide a certain degree of help to businesses so they will hire the unemployed. With the laws which we are now passing it is becoming a very difficult endeavour. Mr. Speaker, I could provide you with typical cases in my area of businesses or persons who want to help our people to make themselves available for work and sell the production of the companies to this very population which is simply asking to be given the means to buy the manufactured goods of these same companies.

Because the government with its legislation refuses to help those people, we now have close to one million unemployed in Canada; I shall not say like the New Democratic Party that there are more than one million unemployed. We deny to those same people the right to go into business or we refuse to try to make them work.

A few days ago I heard the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) say that 341,000 jobs were created in the year 1978 or in the budget for 1977-1978. Congratulations! I lift my hat to the Prime Minister when he says that. But where I think the minister misleads the population is when he omits to say how many people or how many companies had to close down because of our policies.

**Mr. Roy (Laval):** Ask Mr. Lévesque!

### *Unemployment Insurance Act*

**Mr. Caouette (Villeneuve):** The hon. member for Laval (Mr. Roy) says: Ask Mr. Lévesque. It is not true. He is like all the others, and I should go further, and say that he and the Prime Minister always make the premier of Quebec responsible for those numerous lay-offs.

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My belief is we should give that premier an opportunity to prove himself, but right now let us ask this government why they are denying investments that are needed. If someone knows the reason, it is the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Right now civil servants pretending they know every area in the country but are based in Montreal, Quebec city or Ottawa suggest they know my area, northwest Quebec, while they refuse that those companies locate an industry that could create jobs.

This government however put forward a very important piece of legislation, expecting that we rush it through today. I would be most anxious to go home to my family rather than being here tonight, and I am certain other members also would be most happy to go home. The government, however, put forward a bill at the last moment in order, not that we give the present we gave Mr. Justice—

**An hon. Member:** Are we not comfortable here?

**Mr. Caouette (Villeneuve):** Of course we are comfortable, but we are comfortable because we have the courage to try and defend the people. And concerning the hon. member for Longueuil (Mr. Olivier) who feels so comfortable, I am sure he would be just as happy as we would if he could go home to his family and celebrate Christmas.

However, Mr. Speaker, we should not stop at that thought, and the proof is here tonight, on both sides of this House, we are responsible. We are here tonight to try and defend the people that need us to have the same opportunity to celebrate Christmas and New Year's. A few days ago we hurried to give Mr. Justice Morand an opportunity to celebrate Christmas without penalizing others. Unfortunately, I feel that with Bill C-14 the government does not extend the same opportunity to the unemployed.

Mr. Speaker, my contribution shall not be completely negative, because I want to make concrete proposals to the government, and take a positive stand as well. When introducing his bill the minister stated that he wanted to prevent abuse, as I said earlier, in connection with unemployment insurance benefits. Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out one thing to hon. members and particularly to government members about the problems we want to solve and which the minister would try to solve with his bill. Members of my party can say that this bill will never solve the problem we now have.

There are reasons which explain the present economic recession, and there are also reasons which explain the present unemployment rate. The government knows them, but it lacks