

Employment and Immigration

having some independence, Statistics Canada, and not on in-house studies because, in effect, we are calling on the commission to evaluate its own rules and then to change the rules. The commission is judging its own operations. I think that is very unfair, because in situations I have experienced the commission has set its policies, it has bad examples which could be used to defend those policies, and those who have had cases before the commission have found themselves having to prove that they were not guilty of infractions of policies which were set. That is pretty difficult. Here, in this in-house study, there is a rather enlightening statement about Newfoundland. It says:

The seasonal inshore fishing, (e.g., lobster fishermen) may have some difficulty in operating for ten weeks in the Stephenville labour market area.

It goes on to say:

There is an indication that some employers in small or isolated communities deliberately hire seasonal workers in such a way as to provide at least the minimum number of insured weeks to as many persons as possible and thereby ensure an adequate work force at their doorstep when needed.

That is one of the criticisms we have made. This narrative reports on an in-house study of the Unemployment Insurance Commission which really does not serve the needs of those people who have to use the services of the commission. Criticism of this was made in the committee. We were not the only ones to criticize this procedure of the commission. It was criticized in an excellent brief from the Quebec Federation of Labour. That federation appeared before the standing committee in connection with this bill. I would like to quote from that brief. On page 7 of its brief, the Quebec Federation of Labour deals with the comprehensive review. That comprehensive review tells us what an avenue for cheating the minor attachment period is. The review tells us it was so generous that it was a disincentive to work and was abused. That conclusion was arrived at as a result of individual interviews.

We were told in the committee that as a result of interviewing people on an individual basis, the commission came to the conclusion that this was a disincentive. Is it not wonderful that with a million people unemployed in this country, the commission tells us that the minimum attachment period is a disincentive to work? With respect to the way in which the commission gathered the data on which it made suggestions, and based on which we have legislation to change the minimum attachment period, the Quebec Federation of Labour had this to say:

However, the UIC fails to specify that many illegal dismissals are included among or rather disguised as voluntary departures. We wish to stress the fact that the UIC does not recognize alcoholism as a disease, that the employer has the right to dismiss a worker for wanting to join a union, and that the UIC does not consider industrial allergies, nervous breakdowns or discrimination valid reasons for departure and that is why they are included among voluntary departures.

Hence, these people become subject to a six-week penalty of no benefits. These people are included in the data which resulted in this legislation. It is worthy to mention that the QFL went on to say the following:

Moreover, the vast majority of statistics quoted in this comprehensive report are based on administrative data of the UIC which is the only reference mentioned. As far as we know, all unemployment insurance statistics should be

drawn from the monthly "Statistical Report on the Operation of the Unemployment Insurance Act", Statistics Canada catalogue no. 73-001.

That is, basically, our argument. On the one hand, we say that it is fine to use the most up to date figures of Statistics Canada with respect to setting the rate of unemployment for unemployment insurance purposes, but on the other hand it seems to us that it would have been much more helpful if the minister had extended that and proposed that all policies or proposed legislation would be drawn from what is recognized as being an independent source of statistical data. It seemed to us that we have left this act completely in the hands of the Unemployment Insurance Commission which set up the policy, administered it, looked after setting up the appeal process and then reviewed the appeals to see whether they should go forward. Our simple argument is that it seemed the minister should have at least gone all the way and put this whole operation on a more independent basis.

● (1130)

Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River): Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a few comments on motion No. 4 and suggest to the minister that we find nothing particularly objectionable about the fact that the Unemployment Insurance Commission would use up to date information provided by Statistics Canada. That would seem only natural. I have two caveats, however, and I hope the minister will respond to them. The first is that I think when the ministry is using the information provided by Statistics Canada they should attempt to make sure there is some kind of projection of people who are unemployed but are not currently seeking work because they have been seeking it for many months and have finally given up reporting to the Canada Manpower office. I think this would change the statistics. There are many who would like to have work, but after six months or more have given up hunting for a job or reporting at the Manpower offices. If we have seasonally adjusted unemployment, surely we should have an adjustment for those people.

I should particularly like the minister to respond to my second point. In this Canadian democracy in 1977, surely it is a shame that native Indians are not included in the labour force data. I know the minister might argue with that because there is a separate department that looks after Indians—the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. But that argument does not hold up, Mr. Speaker. We have a bilingual policy in this country, for instance, but we do not keep separate data for French-speaking people and English-speaking people who are unemployed. There is also a multiculturalism policy, but separate data is not kept on people of German, Ukrainian or Swedish descent. Yet our Indian people are accounted for by another department.

It is commendable, of course, that the commission will use the most up-to-date information available from Statistics Canada, but it is inexcusable that native Indians, who often have the highest rate of unemployment in winter months—sometimes as much as 95 per cent—are not included in the total unemployment figures just because they are Indians. This is a sham and an act of bigotry, Mr. Speaker. The argument