

Unemployment Insurance Act

people who are themselves employed and are doing part-time work and unregulated work.

An Hon. Member: Moonlighting.

Mr. Langdon: Call it moonlighting, if you like. They are people who in fact are taking the skills which they have got, often in the construction field but there is a wide section of other parts of our economy in which this is true also. They are working outside, in a kind of shadow economy for which they do not pay taxes. They do not make contributions to various benefit programs, et cetera.

The question which I would like to ask is what makes the Member think, and what evidence can he point to that in fact it is people who are facing unemployment and suffering the deprivation which the situation of unemployment has put them into and which this legislation is going to worsen, that in fact it is people who are unemployed who are part of that shadow economy or that underground economy? Certainly I do not see any evidence to that effect in the experiences that I have had with people who are, if you like, moonlighting.

I would like to raise a last point with the Member. As somebody who is concerned and has expressed his concern in the past about the arbitrary exercise of government power, I wonder how the Member would justify the parts of this Bill which, as the news release from the Minister put it, indicate that there will be people who will be excluded from some of their benefits in the future if they refuse, as it is put quite clearly here, a suitable job.

The question is, who decides what a suitable job is? The answer seems to be that a suitable job will be something which bureaucrats in a government bureaucracy will themselves decide is a suitable job. Is that in fact the kind of arbitrary power that we should be giving to the unemployment insurance authorities in this country? Is that not in fact quite a dangerous mechanism which puts far too much authority to act in quite an arbitrary way with respect to individuals who are searching for work in their field or searching for work which will support the family which they have to support, and yet are told in an arbitrary way that they have to accept a given job or else they are cut off benefits for a penalty period?

Is that really the direction that we should be taking to an increase in that kind of arbitrary government authority?

Mr. Kempling: Mr. Speaker, what the Member calls arbitrary government authority or bureaucratic authority has always been there. As long as the Unemployment Insurance Act has been in place, where jobs were available, if people were not taking the jobs, someone had to make a judgment call. Someone has to say: "Is that person capable of doing that job?" I will readily admit that there are errors. I have seen them, and I am sure the Hon. Member has experienced them in his constituency the same as I have. There are things like a 50-year old woman refused a job as a gas pump jockey. I do not blame her. I would not take it myself. We always get those distortions but by and large, I think they are fairly reasonable.

On one occasion I had a lady come to me and say that she was a comptometer operator and she could not find a job as a comptometer operator. I had to think because it has been so long since they have used comptometers in business. I think the last one I saw was in a museum. She was a comptometer operator and she would not take a job in an office doing any sort of clerical work unless she could operate a comptometer. To me, that was a very unusual decision on her part. She was subsequently told that if she did not take a job that her funding would be cut off. She subsequently took a job in an office. We run into that sort of thing.

I think the people in the Canada Employment Centre offices try to be sensitive to the individuals out there. If they get an individual who is not being altogether forthright with them and arbitrarily refusing employment, they bring them in and interview them and try and determine the reason why. The individual has a source of recourse to appeal and ultimately they can come to their Member of Parliament, which none of us really want, but they can ultimately do that and appeal the matter that way.

As far as the underground economy goes, I mentioned that because if anybody believes there is not an underground economy, he is not in the real world. I am not saying that there is anything wrong with it either. If a person wants to have two jobs or three jobs, there is nothing wrong with that, if they can do it, if they can and stand it. I recall when my son was going to college, I think he had three jobs beside going to school. He was pretty proud of it. He is proud of it today, and I was proud of him for taking that sort of initiative. However,