

riding come to see me every week because they have problems with the unemployment insurance, because of the deliberate attempt of some officers to get them out of the system and blame it on the computer, telling them their file has been "set aside" and their cheque might come in four weeks.

People are sick of the present system. Therefore, what will it be like with the new legislation? I regularly defend people with job problems before the arbitration board. Very often, we have to go before the board while the people are perfectly right and the officials could give them their benefits immediately. But they would rather say: Go and see your member of parliament, he will take care of it. In your case, you are lucky, your member of parliament is a Social Creditor. Those people like cases of unemployment. They can deal with them.

In the constituency of Lotbinière, I replaced a man who had done a great job for the entire population and who was thoroughly devoted to the interests of his constituents. I represent the same people and I want to do the same job and always defend the weak, those who need it, the clothing or furniture plant employees, the unemployed, the welfare recipients, those who most need someone humane from their own constituency to serve them and to defend them from this type of bureaucracy.

As for the legislation under consideration, that we shall be forced to pass because of closure, and I am thinking about the bill on unemployment, certain members could have stood up and said something. Last Tuesday, certain government members rose in the House and said that the bill was not very good and would cause problems in their area because of the unemployment figures. I cannot wait to see what these people will do when it is time to vote. Will they truly represent their constituents or will they decide that they must first support their government? I believe that since we are elected by the people, whatever the legislation before us, we should vote according to our conscience and according to what the people whom we represent want us to do.

I know that we do not have much time and I would like as many members as possible to speak about the amendments. There are about 16 amendments to be discussed from now until 9.45, and we certainly do not have enough time to make the necessary representations.

I believe that each member should have the opportunity to say at least a few words about this bill. I shall therefore close my comments by saying that it is essential to change our present systems concerning unemployment and all other social legislation and to implement a universal guaranteed annual income, which would avoid the need for the ministers to rise in the House to say that we must put an end to abuse.

No abuse would be possible as everybody would get it. We would just have to get it back in some other way from those who already have an adequate income. I think we should give everyone a minimum income, an adequate income, so that they

Unemployment Insurance Act

will not have to go down on their hands and knees before some civil servant that will crush them a little further down and say: I have a good job, I am paid every week, I do not need you and you will get your cheque when I please.

So I hope, Mr. Speaker, that my remarks will be heard by the Minister of Employment and Immigration and that he will at least make up his mind to withdraw this bill and to improve the unemployment insurance legislation for the sake of all Canadian citizens.

[English]

Mr. Joe Clark (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate; I only regret that I am taking part in it in the circumstances in which parliament is forced to deal with this bill, one which has very serious faults in it. What is worse, we are forced to deal with it in a way which prevents improvements, which prevents the House of Commons doing the very work it is here to do.

We know we are in a situation of closure and we are in this situation for unusual reasons. For one thing, there are very deep divisions among supporters of the Liberal party with regard to this measure.

[Translation]

There is a good deal of disagreement, probably more than on any other issue now before this House.

[English]

That is the reason we are facing closure. Usually when closure is introduced, it is to prevent the opposition from talking. In this case closure has been introduced by this government to stop its own backbenchers.

● (1532)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Maine: How can you be so stupid? Hypocrite.

Mr. Clark: The proof of that came on Monday night when four Liberals took part in the debate. One was the minister, who was obliged to defend what he introduced, but the other three, the hon. member for Hochelaga (Mr. Lavoie), l'honorable député de Charlevoix (Mr. Lapointe) and the hon. member for South Western Nova (Miss Campbell), all Liberal members, got up one after another, criticized this bill and indicated—and we will be able to test their word later tonight or tomorrow—that they were not able to support the bill which was before the House in the form it was in. The minister knew that if he gave more latitude to more Liberal members so that they could get up and make more speeches, there would be more criticism of his own bill from his own party.

Mr. Maine: Untrue.

Mr. Clark: The reason we have closure is not to silence the opposition, which is usually the case. The reason we have closure is to silence the unquiet, divided and decaying Liberal party.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!