

unemployed people in Canada, of whom nearly 210,000 live in these regions suffering from the economic climate.

Many young people who have to rely more and more on insecure employment will be victims of these measures. They will not collect UI, no, they will have to live on welfare. What a program, Mr. Speaker!

We learned some good news last week: unemployment had declined. Bravo! But that is mainly thanks to the economic recovery in the United States, so the government should not boast. Nothing in its budget has helped the economy recover in this country, Canada. But at least, if the economy is recovering, the government should not put obstacles in the way of those who want to participate in this economic recovery.

When I hear the Minister of Human Resources Development say that he wants to require beneficiaries to work for longer periods to qualify for the same number of weeks of benefits, my hair stands on end! As if the unemployed chose to be out of work. That is not the problem, Mr. Speaker. Unemployment in our area is due to the lack of jobs and to the fact that more and more people have to go from one temporary job to another.

Do not mention the infrastructure program to me; it only creates temporary jobs, not real permanent jobs. There is nothing to give confidence back to the 1.5 million unemployed people throughout Canada and the 428,000 in Quebec. No. The eligibility conditions will not be tightened and the number of weeks of benefits will not be reduced. It is a big deal.

As I just said, the result will be to shift claimants from unemployment insurance to welfare. This passing the buck to the provinces, which is what it is, Mr. Speaker, will cost the provinces at least \$1 billion, of which \$280 million is for Quebec, according to the figures put forward by three economists from the Université du Québec à Montréal. The government, more generous, no doubt, estimates the costs at between \$64 and \$135 million only.

• (1845)

Clause 28, Part V, of Bill C-17 is complete nonsense. This clause modifies the number of weeks of benefit entitlement and abolishes the qualifying salary range for UI. As I have just demonstrated, these measures affect areas with the greatest needs. Again, the unemployed do not choose their situation, no matter what certain dinosaurs seem to think in Canada.

Still, according to the previously mentioned study conducted by three economists from the University of Quebec in Montreal, 90 percent of the unemployed in Quebec did not voluntarily quit their jobs. We are talking here about lay-offs, job losses, illnesses or buy-outs. Others are looking for a first job, but are not receiving any UI benefits. Job security is practically non-

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existent. We have no control over the length of employment. Workers accept casual, precarious or seasonal jobs. Not by choice. It is not that they refuse stable jobs and decent salaries, but rather that only these types of jobs are available. I cannot believe that we must still explain that to the government.

Another point which supports our case for amending this bill is the government's decision not to lower immediately the UI premium rate from \$3.07 to \$3 for employees, and from \$4.30 to \$4.20 for employers. The Minister of Finance decided to postpone this move until 1995. I think the good news from last week concerning the reviving economy should prompt the government to reinstate the \$3 rate as soon as possible. You know as well as I do how fragile an economic recovery can be.

Cavemen did not spit on the fire they wanted to light. Rather, they blew carefully on it to make it brighter. It is that kind of care that is needed to ensure economic recovery. Why jeopardize the recovery when one could have frozen the rates in January and could still do it with an amendment to the bill?

Not later than last week, the minister of Finance recognized in an interview with Canadian journalists that, considering their current levels, U.I. premiums killed jobs. The Minister of Finance said and I quote: "The problem today is not that we must take fiscal measures to encourage job creation. Rather, we have to eliminate fiscal measures that deter employers from hiring people. That is the real problem."

I am glad to see that the minister has identified the problem. Now he only has to take action. Why was Bill C-17 not brought in with that in view? When a job is botched, there is no shame to do it again. When the government brings in the House a bill which will reduce inequities between richer and poorer provinces, measures which will create jobs for the young and cancel the raise in both employers' and workers' premiums, it will have done a real good job.

As the slogan of a well-known Quebec humorous magazine says, it is not because we laugh that it is funny. Yet, I feel that this is the reaction of Canadians to the government's promises. The government claims that the reduction in the unemployment insurance premiums in 1995-96 will create 40,000 jobs by 1996. Those who prepared the budget have taught us a few things. Every 1 per cent reduction creates some 1,300 jobs. One does not have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that any increase leads to a loss of jobs in the same proportion. The government talks about 40,000 jobs that were eliminated in its last budget. Where will the government re-create these 9,000 lost jobs? In its budget, the Liberal government proposes to re-create these same 9,000 jobs by lowering premiums to their 1993 levels. There is the catch! The government will re-create what it had eliminated. The remaining 31,000 jobs will not appear as if by magic.