

Employment and Immigration

cannot get eight weeks of work, much less ten weeks, and in three years time 14 weeks. You are rising, Mr. Speaker, and I think you are trying to tell me something.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, I have to tell the hon. member that his time has expired. I have already allowed him to take advantage of the 30-minute allotted time to the mover of a motion. Perhaps the House will permit me at this time to propose to the House motions Nos. 8 and 10 appearing in the name of the hon. member for Brant (Mr. Blackburn). They were enumerated in the list. Motion No. 7 is in the name of the minister. To proceed in an orderly fashion, motions Nos. 8 and 9 should be put to the House.

Mr. John Rodriguez (for the hon. member for Brant, Mr. Blackburn) moved motion No. 8:

That Bill C-27, an act to establish the Department of Employment and Immigration, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971 and to amend certain other statutes in consequence thereof, be amended in clause 29 by striking out line 10 at page 12 and substituting the following therefor:

"eight or more weeks but less than".

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Manpower and Immigration) moved motion No. 9:

That Bill C-27, an act to establish the Department of Employment and Immigration, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971 and to amend certain other statutes in consequence thereof, be amended

(a) by renumbering clause 30 as subclause 30(1);

(b) by striking out line 21 at page 12 and substituting the following therefor:

"(a) has, subject to subsections (3) and (4), had fourteen or more weeks of";

(c) by adding immediately after line 23 at page 12, the following new subclause:

"(2) Section 17 of the said act is further amended by adding thereto the following subsections:

"(3) During the period of thirty-six months that begins on the day that this subsection comes into force, the number of weeks of insurable employment that a claimant shall have in order to qualify to receive benefit shall be the number of weeks shown in table 3 of schedule A, based on the regional rate of unemployment that applies to him.

(4) The commission may, with the approval of the governor in council and subject to affirmative resolution of parliament, extend the period of thirty-six months mentioned in subsection (3)."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: This also brings motion No. 10 before the House.

Mr. John Rodriguez (for the hon. member for Brant, Mr. Blackburn) moved motion No. 10:

That Bill C-27, an act to establish the Department of Employment and Immigration, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971 and to amend certain other statutes in consequence thereof, be amended in clause 30 by striking out line 21 at page 12 and substituting the following therefor:

"(a) has had eight or more weeks of"

Mr. Cyril Symes (Sault Ste. Marie): Mr. Speaker, I want to supplement some of the comments made by my colleague, the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez), on the amend-

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

ments that are before us to the Unemployment Insurance Act, specifically the one that raises the minor attachment period from the existing 8 weeks to a new formula varying between 10 and 14 weeks. I want to say at the outset that I think the intent of the amendment moved by the government is based on the wrong premise. It is based on the assumption that somehow people are taking advantage of the unemployment insurance program, especially young people and women, by getting eight weeks' employment and then collecting unemployment insurance benefits.

The reasoning behind the various amendments we have before us seems to be to end this abuse by designating the minimum qualifying period of work according to the unemployment rate in the region; but the total effect is to raise the minimum number of weeks of work required before one is eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. When we look at the figures and the nature of those who are minor claimants—those who in the past have worked a minimum of eight weeks—we find that the greatest proportion of these people come from areas in the country where unemployment is very severe.

I recall going to Newfoundland and Cape Breton, together with the leader of our party and some of my colleagues, on a fact-finding mission about unemployment and what the federal government agencies, the Department of Manpower and Immigration and the Unemployment Insurance Commission, were doing to meet the problem. There we saw the severe unemployment and learned from officials in the federal departments, as well as from employers and people in the labour movement, that for many Newfoundlanders—indeed, it seems to be the case more and more with Cape Bretoners—it is difficult in many cases to find work for periods of eight or ten weeks at a time because much of the work is seasonal.

We were told, for example, that young people and women often sought employment in fish plants, but it was the exception if they could find eight or ten weeks steady employment at a time at the fish plants, because it was a seasonal kind of employment with up and down cycles, so they could probably get work in the fish plant for five or six weeks and then be laid off. There was a built-in disincentive to going to work. If someone was receiving benefits and the job was open at the fish plant, but it was only for six or seven weeks, if that person took the job it would disqualify him, after he was laid off, from getting unemployment insurance because of the lack of qualifying work weeks. So there really was a disincentive to work in that situation.

● (1240)

Raising the minimum work requirement to anywhere from 10 to 14 weeks is not really going to be an incentive for people in high unemployment areas to stay on the job or not to move from one job to another. The plain fact is that job opportunities are just not there. Let us consider, for example, what these changes will do to the Newfoundland economy. It will disqualify people from receiving unemployment insurance benefits. Millions of dollars of funds which would otherwise be in