

statement, there was a severe restriction on the number of witnesses who could be heard. There was certainly a restriction on the time which each witness was allowed, which was about one hour before the committee.

Because of the efforts of the minister and the parliamentary secretary to force this legislation through the committee stage as quickly as possible, the witnesses were not allowed enough time to prepare their briefs, do the necessary research, and present telling evidence to the government which might have convinced it to accept some revisions to the legislation. There were accusations by some witnesses that they were severely handicapped by the shortness of time allowed to them to prepare their brief and present it to the committee.

I repeat, it was quite an education. When I came to the House, I felt that government and opposition members alike would co-operate and look at legislation before them, not as the end-all and be-all in itself, but as a proposal for the committee to work on, make amendments to, and make adjustments so that it would be a little more perfect when it came back to this chamber for final deliberation. I did not see that. As I say, I saw a government which had a piece of paper in its hand called Bill C-14. I saw that it was completely unwilling to accept amendments or to listen to witnesses.

Mr. Boulanger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I hesitate to do so knowing that the hon. member is a newcomer. As with all NDP members, he learns fast. However, I think he is going a bit too far. I suggest that he stick to motion No. 1 rather than give a résumé of what happened in committee. I believe he should be instructed to stick to the motion before us.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): I suggest the hon. member for Humber-St. George's-St. Barbe (Mr. Faour) stick closely to motion No. 1.

Mr. Faour: Mr. Speaker, I believe my comments are relevant to the over-all consideration of the bill. The experience over the past three weeks has given me, as a freshman, certain opinions on the bill which I would like to present. It is important that hon. members understand how I came to feel this way and have these opinions with regard to what has gone on.

I repeat, it was my opinion as a freshman member that, in the main, the government was unwilling to accept alterations or amendments to this bill. As I said before, the attitude was, "My mind is made up, don't confuse me with the facts." That is my opinion of the government's attitude.

I come from one of the poorest regions of the country. My constituency is among the highest unemployment areas in this country. The official unemployment figure announced by Statistics Canada is in the vicinity of 15 per cent to 17 per cent. However, Statistics Canada has finally adopted a concept of hidden unemployment figures. Including the hidden unemployed in my constituency, the figure would be somewhere between 25 per cent and 30 per cent. Because of that, my constituents are very much interested in what goes on with this bill and what it will mean to them.

Unemployment Insurance Act

There are communities in my constituency—the same probably applies all over the country but my experience is related only to Newfoundland—where at certain times of the year unemployment insurance is almost the only source of income for a great majority of the people. For many people it is the only source of income for at least a certain part of the year. It is a very necessary part of their family budgeting for the year. Without it, they would be destitute.

To give an indication of what this might mean, I will quote the reaction of a member of the minister's department, an employee of the commission in St. John's. When confronted with the type of proposals the minister announced in August, his reaction was that in Newfoundland next winter it will mean cold homes and hungry children. That man had seen how necessary unemployment insurance is in one particular part of this country. He knew precisely what the effect would be of restricting or withdrawing benefits from certain people.

Cold homes and hungry children in Canada in 1979 are completely unacceptable. That is not the way this country should be governed. However, that is what the minister is offering to people on the northwest and northeast coasts of Newfoundland, people who have no alternative to unemployment insurance.

It is difficult to tell someone to get a job when there are no jobs available, when the unemployment rate in that area is between 25 per cent and 30 per cent, and the person knows that if he moves to a large city he will not have the necessary skills to get a job. In addition, it would mean leaving his family and his home.

I know the minister has encouraged young people in particular to travel around this country. That may be very commendable, but it is another story when you are forced to leave your home and your family. When a member of the family has to travel to western Canada in order to support his family back home, it often results in a broken family. I hope that is not what the minister is offering the people in parts of the country like Newfoundland. I know that deep down he is a good man. If he knew the facts, he would not be offering that kind of solution to those who have no alternative.

The proposals before us in Bill C-14 will do two major things. They will restrict the number of people who can collect unemployment insurance benefits and reduce the amount of benefits they receive. Let us look at these individually to see how they relate to my part of the country where unemployment is extremely high.

Because of the seasonal nature of their occupations, such as working in a fish plant, fishing, logging or whatever, some people in my constituency only get so many weeks work during the summer. In the past, this has meant they have been able to obtain unemployment insurance which has enabled them to survive the winter without having their children cold and hungry. They survive the winter with some degree of dignity in the hope that the next summer they will be able to obtain the same kind of work which will carry them over the next winter. For more than 8,000 in Newfoundland this will not be possible—they will be forced on to the welfare rolls, they will be