

Supply

government, if it is going to proceed at the rate it is going.

At the same time, I think Mr. Buchanan is right that there is going to be a great loss of income available within the area.

This motion is simple. It does two things. It allows the status quo to continue beyond January 6 until the bill is passed. If the motion is passed as it is, it will not have all the consequences that I have said it could. But it will also allow the 139 groups which want to make representations to point out the concerns that exist. I do not know why the government feels that the Senate is not entitled to look at this, to give it a sober second look. I am glad the Senate is there.

I know what the effect will be in my riding. I think I mentioned that well over \$1,000 per claimant will not be received if this bill passes. There is no provision for make-work programs to enable them to earn the benefits within the community.

I repeat, this is one of the harshest pieces of legislation that I have seen in the 15 years that I have been involved in politics. I do not believe that the government has looked at the effects and consequences. We have the opportunity for the Senate to look at it and hear the 139 groups. I think it is only right that the variable entrance requirement be maintained rather than going to 14 weeks.

The member from St. John's has been here a short time. He perhaps does not know what it is going to be like for his people to have to have 14 weeks, come January 6, if this bill is not passed. Since 1977, for 12 years, we have consistently passed this little amendment that allows the variable entrance requirement to continue. That variable entrance requirement means that people in the hon. member's area may only need 10 or 11 weeks in order to qualify.

If our motion is rejected by the other side today, people will need 14 weeks to qualify. If they are repeaters, as a good many are in some areas like South West Nova, which means they have established the second claim, they will need 20 weeks, come January 7, in order to qualify. Given the economic conditions that have existed this year for fish plant workers, it will be a very hard task indeed to find that 20 weeks.

• (1540)

I beg the government to pass this. It did it last year, it did it for the four years or more that it has been in office.

Mr. Reid: Just pass the legislation.

Mrs. Campbell (South West Nova): This is ransom. Why should the weakest people in Canada be denied the right to have fair scrutiny of Bill C-21 when the government has always passed the variable entrance requirement? It has been passed for six years.

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, I will be speaking later on this and I will address some of the points specifically, but a couple of remarks have perhaps raised my blood pressure a little so that I cannot let them pass right now.

First of all, the hon. member stands there, points to me and says that I know nothing about the variable entrance requirement because the unemployment rate in Newfoundland is too high. Let me tell you about the variable entrance requirement, Madam Speaker. Let me speak of the people of Bell Island where there is a horrendous unemployment rate. It is an island in the middle of Conception Bay with no land transportation. It has a 70 to 75 per cent unemployment rate. In my region when the unemployment rate drops .2 per cent, under the old laws they go from 10 weeks to 16 weeks, just like that. That is what happens if the other place does not pass this legislation, that is the sort of thing that hurts people.

It is the variable entrance requirements and moving on with this legislation that is going to help and protect people, that is going to give them options, not stone walls. The member stands there and tells us we do not know what it is like because the unemployment rate is too high. Well, it does not work that way.

The greatest effect of changing the regions has taken place in my constituency and I have supported it because it is a response to the eight or 10 groups that appeared before the committee in St. John's, Newfoundland in the fall. They said, "Change it, make it fairer". I have supported what the minister of state has done.

I do not normally get this excited. I try to keep very calm and to the point, but may I sum up my comments on the hon. member's speech. I will not use the words that the parliamentary secretary used about knowledge of the legislation and having read it. The repeater provision is eliminated under the new legislation. It is gone. There are no more penalties for living off fish and forestry and seasonal employment. It is gone. It is eliminated. It is not