

*Government Orders*

some hope for the future by letting them pick up trash when they are between the ages of 50 and 65.

• (1045)

This bill will endear the government to no one, especially in the Maritimes, where the Liberals were elected with a strong majority and where they never told the workers who voted for them and their promises of jobs, that all these people who were seasonally employed would soon see their benefits cut by an omnibus bill.

These cuts are substantial, Mr. Speaker. We saw the overall figures, but to the individual, it means a loss of thousands of dollars and a change of status. For the benefit of those who have never been unemployed, there is a world of difference between being on unemployment insurance between jobs and being forced to go on welfare and feel like a social reject.

Measures to provide that in some cases, people could be employed for a certain time and then go on unemployment insurance, were introduced by a previous Liberal government. The Liberals initiated this mechanism to provide for a measure of equity regions and between individuals.

Did the Liberals not realize that these cutbacks would come down harder on the Maritimes and Quebec? Was this a coincidence and were they convinced that this was the route they had to take? No. Were they unaware of the consequences? Not on your Nelly. In the unemployment insurance bureaucracy it was common knowledge that people with short term employment could depend on unemployment insurance to supplement their income and could apply again, if they had to, but not every year. They could have this security, this money to tide them over. They knew, because there are plenty of tables at Unemployment and Immigration Canada that say so. These tables show that repeaters, as they are commonly called, tend to be from the Maritimes and Quebec. Individuals with between 10 and 20 weeks of employment are from the Maritimes and Quebec. In fact, in 1991, the proportion of repeaters was 65 per cent in Newfoundland, compared with 4 per cent in Ontario.

If the Liberals wanted a debate on the redistributive effect of unemployment insurance, they should have tackled this issue head-on. If Ontarians are sick and tired of paying for the rest of Canada, let us be honest about it, instead of hiding behind an omnibus bill that is touted as a set of new mechanisms but in fact introduces only technical changes.

What does this government want? What is it drawn to? The American model? Is it adapting to the North American model? I ask the question but, as a well-known Liberal Prime Minister once said, to ask the question is to answer it. Is the government adapting its policies to those of the United States, where the norm is six months on unemployment insurance and coverage is

50 per cent of the average industrial wage? We are very close. We are almost there.

These are the same Liberals who fought against free trade and NAFTA, and they are going to make the workers, the victims, pay for the impact of these globalization policies.

On the basis of the figures for the Maritimes and Quebec, our conclusion is that economic problems experienced by individuals can only be addressed by helping the individual. It is economic policy which determines whether or not Quebec's regions can develop. That is the issue.

• (1050)

Since this omnibus bill is presented to implement the budget, let me talk about the economic policy underlying it. This week, during debate on the motion concerning job creation, I said that there are two kinds of countries. There are those where employment is the residue, the leftover, what remains when all the rest has been dealt with, when inflation, the debt and business subsidies have been considered. What else! In other countries, employment is the goal and it conditions all the parameters of a government's policy; it is part of an overall employment policy or strategy, not half-measures. We find half-measures not in what is done but in the promises. We are promised half-measures.

The government has refused to address fiscal policy. It rejected the Bloc's proposal to set up a committee to look at all budget expenditures. The government has pursued the same monetary policy as the Conservatives, unsuccessfully, since we see how threatened the rates are now. The government does not care; on the contrary, the Liberals have always been the natural governing party, especially in Ottawa, so they do not care about giving the regions what they need to develop.

Mr. Speaker, Alain Dubuc, the famous editorialist of *La Presse*—by famous, I mean well-known; I do not always agree with him—recently wrote something which I believe is very important, especially coming from him. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy of the newspaper with me, but I am not misrepresenting him with this quotation: "Lloyd Axworthy did not do what had to be done. He cut before putting measures in place to help workers".

The unemployment insurance measures which arouse the anger we see developing, understandably, will make the most vulnerable and the most disadvantaged pay for a reform that is still poorly defined, but whose outlines we can suppose. Before putting assistance measures in place, before implementing an employment-based economic policy worthy of the name, they cut. They cut and attacked those in the most difficult situation.

As a member of the Committee on Human Resources Development, I heard the testimony of people from Sydney who are completely discouraged. Just raising the qualifying period from 10 to 12 weeks in a region where unemployment is 15 or 16 per cent, there are no jobs and shutdowns are everywhere, throws many individuals and families into despair, because instead of having an adjustment period to find their feet, they are forced to