

Supply

Of these three members—some of whom were here—one said: “Well, I am going to abstain from the vote”. The other has risen to defend the position that we have to do something to “catch these cheaters”, as they like to refer to them.

As far as I am concerned, when we talk about cheaters in a system I think we had better be very careful how we choose our words because in the majority of cases where these so-called cheaters have appealed their cases, the decisions have been overturned. In fact they were not cheaters at all.

This government, with the legislation that it is proposing to introduce at second reading, is going to cast a huge net into the ocean of workers. It might catch two fish.

Unemployment insurance is just that. It is a safety net for workers who become unemployed. They pay into it and they should expect and be entitled to get something out of it when the need is there. I do not think there are very many people in Canada who quit their jobs without just cause.

Let us talk about just cause. Is it just cause if a person wants to increase and better their lot in life by moving on to other employment? They leave their current employer and they go to another employer who perhaps is offering better opportunities for improvement, better wages, better benefits and better conditions.

Let us say an employee goes to a new employer and for some unforeseen reason is not there long enough to establish the number of weeks required to collect unemployment should the case arise. Let us say he does become unemployed. He cannot apply for unemployment under those terms because he has not been there long enough. He cannot go back and claim on the old claim from his old employer because he left without just cause. That is not covered as one of the five or six reasons for leaving for just cause. It is not covered. Shake your head all you want, but it is not there.

Employees do not have the right to try to advance themselves. Under the current conditions, they can do it because at least they will only be penalized 7 or 12 weeks. Under the other conditions, they will lose all benefits.

• (1650)

In terms of sexual harassment, the minister was here a few minutes ago and pleaded emphatically that the benefit of the doubt will go to the worker. However, for goodness' sake, what does the worker have to go through in order to state his or her case?

An hon. member: One must prove it.

Mr. Samson: Absolutely. The minister is back in the House and I am glad that she is. It is very important that we establish what it is that this worker has to go through. A person is sexually harassed by the employer. The employer sees that the employee no longer wants to co-operate with the sexual harassment and does not want to put up with it any more so he says: “You are gone. You are fired”. Who fills out the separation papers? Oh my, gee whiz, it is the employer, is it not? It sure is. What do they put on there? They say: “I sexually harassed this employee and this employee no longer wanted to put up with my nonsense so I fired her for sexual harassment”. Do you think the employer is going to do that? Of course not. Let us not be silly.

The employer will fill out the separation paper and write “fired”. The counsellor at the employment office will look at this when the person applies for unemployment benefits and will say: “You were fired. Why were you fired?” This person now has to go through the indignation, the embarrassment and the degradation of having to bare his or her soul to a complete stranger and explain why they were fired or why they quit.

An hon. member: Shameful.

Mrs. Browes: It is embarrassing for the employer too.

Mr. Samson: The minister states that it is embarrassing for the employer. However, the onus of proof is on the employee, not the employer.

Therefore, we go through the whole appeal process which takes aeons. Ask anybody who has ever had a UI appeal. This person has to bare his or her soul again and again and again to any number of strangers. Give me a break. There is no way that a worker should have to go through that kind of indignation and embarrassment to file an unemployment insurance claim. It is insurance.