

with all those jobs here that could very well go to the Maritimes.

Speaking of New Brunswick, Senator Hébert informed us that unemployment had risen throughout Canada except New Brunswick. He found it amusing that I was surprised because, not knowing he would do so, I referred to the fact that in New Brunswick indeed unemployment decreased in January. I knew that. He referred to that but forgot to tell us why. I will not dwell on that except to say that in my view, New Brunswick is now starting to enjoy the benefits of federal policies and the of the Free Trade Agreement that encourage mining and forestry.

It is fair to say in my view that Mr. McKenna also will recognize the provincial government also is enjoying significant increased windfalls and transfers from the Canadian government. Admittedly, some credit is due to Mr. McKenna's good administration, but the Canadian government contribution through the two initiatives I mentioned earlier—Free Trade and the other—should not be totally ignored.

I would have appreciated for instance that Senator Hébert had stated that the New Brunswick government, through its minister Mrs. Landry, supported Bill C-21 and asked that the Senate pass it. Although Mrs. Landry recognized the bill had some weaknesses, flaws and imperfections, she stated these could be offset through administrative means or regulations. Senator Hébert, being as selective on this as he had been in the choice of witnesses among other things, chose to ignore this.

He referred to Mgr. Valois, he referred to all the people from the left he could muster. But this he forgot. No, I am not questioning Senator Hébert's intellectual sincerity. I am simply blaming an oversight.

To support my case, I may remind you that the Government of New Brunswick, for which I have the greatest respect, has the right to speak for more than 700,000 people. I think its position is just as valid as that of a number of associations from New Brunswick who came to ask that the bill be rejected.

I know it bothers Senator Thériault when I mention this. I was one of the people who, with the support of Senator Thériault, I may add, asked the Government of New Brunswick to make a presentation, since it had been denied this opportunity by the House committee. I was pleased when it was given this opportunity. I was also pleased, and it came as no great surprise that Mrs. Landry, who was probably more realistic and more aware of the limits of power, concluded that it would be in the interests of the people of her province to adopt this bill. I just wanted to make that clear.

In concluding, I want to say that fishermen's benefits remain unchanged in the present bill.

The so-called safety net for people who become unemployed remains. This applied not only to New Brunswick but to other provinces as well, where people are trying to break the vicious circle of a few weeks employment followed by 39 or 40 weeks on unemployment insurance.

[Senator Simard.]

I think Canadians agree that an effort should be made in this respect. A little like what was done in 1971 or 1981, the last time the Liberals changed the Unemployment Insurance Act. I think it was in 1971, when the number of weeks was changed or increased.

Senator Thériault: In 1977, when you supported my motion.

Senator Simard: Honourable senators, it was in 1977, and look at what they say today! As in 1977, people will get used to the fact and people's attitudes will change. With the help of the provincial governments and existing agencies, people may be forced to look around or knock on doors to get one or two weeks like 93 per cent of the people in New Brunswick had to do in 1977. They say peoples' attitudes can change and will be such that no one will be disqualified or lose the safety net I mentioned earlier.

I am of course delighted with the government's decision to make people 65 years old and over and people on maternity leave eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

That was decided as a result of court rulings. I am glad the government included this in the bill. And that is why I must say I deplore the attitude of the Liberal majority in the Senate which has deprived these people of these benefits for a month or a month and a half.

Senator Thériault: That stays.

Senator Simard: This could have been in place since January, for people who had to go and look for three or four weeks more because the Liberal majority refused to adopt the bill.

Even there, peoples' attitudes have changed. Unemployment Insurance offices were full at the beginning of January so people could qualify. There were not too many problems.

But people aged 65 and over and people who might have been able to benefit under the new legislation on maternity leave were not able to do so. I will conclude my speech on this note. Senator Thériault tells us:

[English]

Wake up colleagues! Be passionate—

Senator Thériault: How about compassionate?

Senator Simard: —and listen to people. I have listened to people. Senator Thériault listened to people, too, and followed his mind, judging by his many questions to witnesses. I recall other questions to witnesses by other Liberal senators, asking, for example, why there was not chaos in the streets. Is it only a couple of left wing groups like the honourable senator and some other senators who are worried and concerned? The answer to this question is very simple: Public opinion wants the government to tighten things up and to ask employers and employees to do a better job. The indication is that, although only 1 or 2 per cent may be abusing the system, the costs are high, \$450 million, and sufficient to cause concern.

• (1730)

Those are the things that I believe have led to public opinion being in support of this bill. I am asking my colleagues to weigh all of this. If the Liberals are so sincere, let them kill the