

is constant movement. Even in our economy there is movement. Things change, opportunities come and go, people have and create options.

In Corner Brook where the unemployment rate is roughly 16 or 16.2 per cent, one will only need 10 weeks to qualify, which indicates that we recognize people are affected in higher unemployment areas, and the program respects that.

We have seen the national unemployment rate in this country drop by more than 4 per cent. In Newfoundland and Labrador alone it has come down by 6.3 per cent. In many ways in this business we are the victims of our success. When we fiddle around with statistics, come and go with numbers so that the unemployment rate drops and drops, we become victims of our own progress. I suppose it is a nice problem to have because I agree fully with my hon. friend from Gander—Grand Falls that people want to work. People do not want to be on unemployment insurance. If there is any opportunity to work people will take that opportunity to work.

Since this government came to power jobs have increased in the Atlantic provinces by 106,000. There are 106,000 more of us working out there bringing in a wage, taking care of families and contributing to communities. That is progress. That is something we have seen as a response to government action in co-operation with provinces, the private sector and individuals in the society and in the economy. The government has pledged in the last budget over \$2 billion to Atlantic Canadian initiatives alone.

We talk about the fishery and recognize that there is a problem in the fishery. But for the first time we have a government that is willing to address the problems in the fishery as a national economic issue, not some regional issue. For the first time we have a government that is willing to say there are some problems and it will set up—

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): The government is the problem in dealing with the fishery.

Mr. Reid: I know. We took all the fish. We took them. We got them.

Mr. MacDonald (Dartmouth): You gave it away.

Supply

Mr. Reid: I can answer that one. I have been there. We have a cabinet committee chaired by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, appointed by the Prime Minister and responsible for bringing together government's response on fishery. There is a senior committee of officials to advise that committee. Never before has a government exhibited its commitment to dealing with this problem as a national issue. Never before have we seen that.

I would like to go back if I may to unemployment insurance. I work on the basis of two premises when I deal with unemployment insurance. First, as my hon. friend has said, people would rather work than collect unemployment insurance. Second, the people who are in the unemployment insurance system react to that system in the best interests of themselves, their families, and their communities. There is remarkably little abuse.

Let us look at the statistics. People react to the unemployment insurance system the way some members of this House react to the tax system. They make decisions based on what is best for themselves and best for their families. That is only to be commended.

What are we saying to people if we do not move ahead with this legislation? To me this comes to the core. I am a Newfoundlander. I understand what unemployment insurance is in my province: \$865 million next year. That is a substantial transfer of resources not only to individuals but into the province and that province's economy. Whether we like it or not, whether we pretend it is different, it is an income-supplement-program.

If we stay rock solid with this very narrow, very restrictive program, we are asking it to do something that it was not designed to do. It is designed as an insurance program, but we are asking it to do so much more. If we are going to stay there and simply tell people "that's it, you are going to take your money and that's all", it is all built on negatives. We are going to make no progress in this country. We have to evolve that system and develop that safety net.

What are we doing? We are saying to people that there are options. There are alternatives that we can use with a bit of money and a lot of ingenuity and a fair amount of co-operation. At the same time we have to protect the interests of people who need that protection. The people of my province need to know that. Because their opportunities for employment at this stage are limited they can draw on unemployment insurance, but we have to be