

government, in Bill C-27, is attempting to further erode even this secondary right to unemployment insurance, and it offers as compensation for this certain reorganizational changes in the Manpower programs. Below we present our position and comments on both the changes in unemployment insurance and the changes in Manpower policy. We oppose extending the qualifying period for benefits from the present eight weeks of insurable earnings to the proposed 12 weeks.

We in this party have always maintained that we do not support those who take from a program unjustly or illegally or use the program as a rip-off. We have never supported that. We have said the act provides the tools for the commission to enforce the legislation. Therefore, with the tools they have, they are able to select groups if they suspect certain groups are ripping-off the unemployment insurance program. They have the tools, and they certainly have the authority under the act to enforce the legislation. To turn around and say that this is a disincentive, without providing the proof, is certainly a disservice to the unemployed in this country.

There have been suggestions from the government and from the official opposition that the eight to 11-weekers—that is, the eight to 11-week wonders—is the area where there is a disincentive to work. It leaves itself open to cheating by those who are lazy and do not want to work. As recently as May 28, 1975, the former minister of manpower and immigration had this to say:

If you examine where those short-term attachment people are, you will find that they coincide with areas of this country that have the more chronic conditions of high unemployment.

...they occur in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces to a higher degree because the conditions of disparity there are such that people get marginal jobs, which are almost coincidental with short-term attachment jobs... So I think we have to be extremely careful before we tamper with this (qualifying period).

At that meeting, on the same day, the minister had this to say:

The incidence of disentanglement or disqualification, as an effect of failure to meet one's obligations under the act, is lower amongst the group with a minor attachment to the work force as their proportion of the total claims load than those with a long term attachment to the work force.

As I said before, one wonders what goes on over on the government side of this House. Less than two years ago the former minister said that there was no hanky-panky in the area of minor attachment, and that in effect minor attachment is highly correlated to the areas of seasonal unemployment in Canada. Yet the minister has now come in, armed with a comprehensive review done on in-house studies and reports. That was laid on the people of Canada and it confirms what they have been thinking. They were thinking that these people were collecting unemployment insurance and ripping off the system. That is the conclusion and that is the inference.

We could never accept that in a bill in which the minister talks about work-sharing, job opportunities and job training. How can we take the government seriously in terms of their commitment to eliminate unemployment in this country when it knows, at this particular time in our history, that unemployment is running at about 8 per cent and is talking about cutting back the minor attachment period?

I mentioned the in-house studies on which this proposal was based. I have to be very leery and very suspicious when the

### *Employment and Immigration*

Department of Manpower and Immigration does a narrative report on the various areas of Atlantic Canada and refers to Christmas tree harvesting in Nova Scotia. The report reads:

Christmas tree harvesting lasts for about eight to 12 weeks and employs only a few hundred, mostly in the Bridgewater area. The labour force is about 50 per cent men.

Off-Season Employment: In the Bridgewater area Christmas tree harvesting industry, the men would have a fair chance of finding additional work with highways, the town or the municipality.

That is all speculation; there is no statistical information. When one asks for the figures, you find they do not have them. We only have the opinions of our local Manpower officers in these areas. From Nova Scotia they slip over to New Brunswick, and this is what they have to say about agriculture:

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In New Brunswick, only a few of the agricultural industries have employment lasting less than ten weeks and relatively small numbers of workers are affected.

Again, we have no statistical information as to how many farms there are, how extensive agriculture is in New Brunswick, and how many people are employed in the industry. We have no idea of the rate of drop or rise in farming in that province. They go on to say:

Food processing firms generally have employment of long duration and only those additional employees required for harvesting may not obtain 12 weeks of employment.

This is really the question. These are the kinds of studies on which this very basic change is being made to the act, tampering with the minor attachment period at a time of high unemployment based on these kinds of narrative reports. This is ridiculous. Here is one that is even more atrocious. It is an overview of Atlantic Canada through the eyes of Manpower officers in that area. It reads:

Canada Manpower centres have reported instances of potential claimants quitting their jobs at the peak of the season so that they will qualify with the highest average insured earnings possible.

Who determines that they are potential claimants quitting their jobs early? Do they give us numbers? Do they give us locations? Do they give us facts on whether they have a legitimate claim or whether, in effect, they were cut off? We have none of these figures, yet the minister says, "Take my word for it; this is a fair thing we are doing". The minister said that this has proven to be a disincentive. How is it a disincentive? He points to the fact that they found out, as stated in the comprehensive review, that young people are moving in and out of jobs. The ILO discovered that it is the nature of young people to have a short attachment period to the work force and that this is a factor with respect to that group of workers until they attach themselves to the work force when a different pattern develops. This report, entitled "Highlights of an Examination of Employment Patterns in Atlantic Canada", states:

Generally speaking, it would appear there are few industries or firms which are limited to less than ten weeks of operation in any 12 months' period. Those which are so constrained employ few workers.

I do not think that bureaucrats at the top have been to Newfoundland and to some of the outports there where you