

Private Members' Business

whether an amendment to the Unemployment Insurance Act is the right answer.

Mr. Boudria: Who wrote that?

Mr. Saint-Julien: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell asked me who wrote that. I did. I have a right to prepare my notes. If he wants to take a look, he can come to my office.

Mr. Boudria: If the notes were yours, they would make more sense.

Mr. Saint-Julien: The hon. member talks about sense. I often notice he reads his own notes during Question Period, but I never made an issue of it. In any case, I am not going to argue. Mr. Speaker, I feel that although the amendment proposed by the hon. member is well intentioned, it is clear it is not up to the federal government to offer these people compensation through the Unemployment Insurance Act. Now, did you get that?

Consider the situation. From the outset, in the forties, the main objective of the Unemployment Insurance Act has always been to help workers "temporarily out of work". Canadians can be proud of this legislation because it is an integral part of programs that reflect our social responsibility. However, to make it effective, we have included measures to counter abuse and set criteria to ensure that the money paid during a period of unemployment goes to people who are out of work and are actively seeking a job. I emphasize, these people must be actively seeking employment. I am sure the hon. member will agree that without this provision, human nature being what it is, there would be considerable abuse of unemployment insurance funds. Section 14 of the Act, the section the hon. member wishes to amend, puts a heavy responsibility on unemployment insurance recipients. I wish to quote subsection 14(a):

(a) capable of and available for work and unable to obtain suitable employment on that day--

• (1740)

Mr. Speaker, under the Unemployment Insurance Act, the main concern of a person who is unemployed must be to seek employment, not for three or four days a week but every day. That person must look for a job and be immediately capable of accepting a suitable job offer.

I think the hon. member will agree it is reasonable to assume that if a person serves on a jury or works as a volunteer fireman, laudable though those activities may be, that person is not immediately available for work.

However, Mr. Speaker, the federal government realizes that sometimes there are special circumstances. That is why every application is assessed on its own merits, and as a result, decisions will vary. However, when a UI benefit recipient is selected as a jury member or as a member of a rescue team, if he makes arrangements to be called immediately as soon as suitable employment is available, and if that he then reports for work within 48 hours, then he is eligible for unemployment insurance benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I think the real problem is not the provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Act but the low rates of compensation paid by the provinces for jury duty. For instance, in Ontario, jury members receive nothing during the first ten days of a trial; from the eleventh to the forty-ninth day, they get only \$40 a day, and starting on the fiftieth day, they receive \$100 for their expenses. That is the rule in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, I have yet to see a single federal member urge the Government of Ontario to increase those amounts. They should, but I think they are asleep on the job.

Mr. Speaker, in Quebec they get \$25 a day for the first ten days and \$40 a day for subsequent days. In Newfoundland, Mr. Speaker, employers are responsible for compensating employees who are called for jury duty. Unemployed workers in Newfoundland who are called for jury duty receive \$4.75 an hour, but in Nova Scotia they only get \$15 a day.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to waste the precious time of hon. members by quoting figures for all the provinces. The ones I gave are fairly representative for the provinces as a whole. I hope opposition members understood those figures, and they should, if they can add and subtract. Suffice it to say that in general, the compensation paid by the provinces to persons serving on a jury is far less than UI benefits. However, I am sure hon. members will agree that UI benefits should not be used to subsidize provincial judicial systems.