

of clarifying the rates of unemployment to be used by the commission in determining the entrance requirement, regional extended benefit entitlement under the UI program and the threshold formula for allocating costs to the government and the private sector. The rates of unemployment used by the commission in a number of provisions in the Unemployment Insurance Act and the regulations are the rates provided by Statistics Canada from its monthly labour force survey. At present, however, there is no provision in the Unemployment Insurance Act stipulating which official Statistics Canada rates of unemployment are to be used in cases where the basis for determining those rates has been revised by Statistics Canada.

● (1250)

This proposed motion to amend Bill C-27 would provide that the rates to be used by the commission would be those most recently available. It would be consistent with the methodologies provided by Statistics Canada whereby revised rates of unemployment are released from time to time and officially replace material previously provided.

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, we welcome the amendment, which would allow the minister to use Statistics Canada figures with respect to rates of unemployment, but we think the minister ought to have gone further and committed himself and his department to using information with respect to all figures put out by Statistics Canada which are relevant to the Unemployment Insurance Commission. For example, I refer to Statistics Canada catalogue No. 73-001. It is not enough just to take the most up to date rates of unemployment from Statistics Canada to establish benefits under the plan. It appears that we have to use the statistical information put out by Statistics Canada, and trust it.

At the moment, far too many decisions are made within the UIC on interpretations of data received from Statistics Canada. Many interpretations are put on material based on views held by the UIC. For example, comprehensive review of the unemployment insurance plan in Canada was done, and it is on that basis that Bill C-27 comes before parliament. There are several aspects of that comprehensive review which are based upon UIC interpretations. For example, the UIC does not recognize alcoholism as a disease when considering voluntary quits. Imagine that, in 1977! A person who is let go from his employment or leaves his employment because of alcoholism is considered a voluntary quit!

Mr. Breau: What if he goes for treatment?

Mr. Rodriguez: The hon. member opposite asks, "What if he goes for treatment?" I have never heard anything more silly. That is something which takes place after a person has applied for unemployment insurance and after interviews, and so forth. How do we know that an applicant was prepared to go for treatment after he quit voluntarily and after he was included in the statistics? We do not know. Such information is not provided. Quitting voluntarily, so-called, is not unknown in this country. It is very prevalent. It does not take an

Employment and Immigration

employer very long to fire a person for trying to organize a union in a workplace. We know that banks are famous for that.

Mr. Blackburn: Infamous.

Mr. Rodriguez: As the hon. member for Brant (Mr. Blackburn) says, they are infamous. UIC statistics would consider that a voluntary quit. Those statistics imply that that person put himself into a position to be fired. With respect to voluntary quits, the UIC does not take into account the fact that the environment in a workplace may be such that a particular worker might be allergic to it. That is not considered to be a legitimate reason for quitting a job.

These statistics are interpreted by bureaucrats in the UIC and they find their way into comprehensive reviews. On the basis of those comprehensive reviews, recommendations are made which result in bills like Bill C-27. The UIC is shot through with bureaucratic interpretations of data which may have to be obtained from Statistics Canada. The program is not necessarily implemented according to information received. Bureaucrats in the UIC receive information and then project their own interpretations. For example, in the comprehensive review on page C-5 it is noted that 47.2 per cent of those who supposedly left their jobs voluntarily were not entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. That, then, becomes a statistic within the UIC. That statistic is now being used to beat the unemployed across the country over the head, and it has resulted in this particular bill.

We would have been very pleased if the minister had extended the amendment a lot further by saying that other statistical data could be used for purposes of computing the benefits to be paid or the length of time benefits were to be paid in a region—which is what the minister is going to come up with later on in this debate—and that other information with respect to the number of people, for example, who have quit their jobs could be used. Using those statistics provided by Statistics Canada would give those of us who deal with the act on a day to day basis with respect to our constituents when they deal with UIC confidence that this policy decision was not concocted in some ivory tower in Ottawa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this day.

At one o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House met at 2 p.m.