

end, and their postal codes are not being churned out of the machine to give you the labour surplus rate, and those who have come out of school are young and have not been able to put in enough weeks to get laid off and receive cheques, will not be counted. This has exacerbated the problem at both ends and you are just counting those people who were lucky enough to get a job and are still getting their unemployment insurance cheques. That is why I have always disagreed with this program.

I fought the former minister for three years on it. Eventually, after three years, he wrote me a letter and he partly agreed. He did not wholeheartedly agree but he partly agreed. I notice that the minister is following the same system this year. I hope, if there is any further project in the future, a revised system will be used rather than that system because of its failings, as I see them.

Quite frankly I would hope it would be a system that might take into consultation the local members and the regional economists. I hope this would be possible. I just wanted to emphasize how much I dislike the labour surplus rate formula developed by the minister's predecessor, and I hope that he can guarantee that this will not be used if there are any future projects or programs. Perhaps something could be done in co-operation with the regional economists because I trust their figures are a lot better. I have always found their figures to be much higher than the labour surplus rate.

Mr. Atkey: Mr. Chairman, those are concerns that I have shared with the hon. member previously. I can tell him that I am not happy with the labour surplus rate as the determinant of unemployment in a region. I think it is one of those factors that has developed under the previous government because of the insistence of the previous government that Canada Works moneys and Young Canada Works moneys and, before that, LIP moneys, be allocated by constituency, that is, the political boundaries. Apparently there was no other means devised of determining the unemployment within a constituency other than by the postal code and the labour surplus rate, with all of the imperfections the hon. member has so articulately put before the committee.

Were I proceeding on any new employment or job creation programs that were to be determined on a constituency by constituency basis I would be earnestly searching for an alternative that was an improvement. However, I can assure the hon. member that Canada Works is in its final phase. The new employment strategy of the government, to be announced on budget night, December 11, will indicate that we will put the money into those regions, not those constituencies but those regions that need it the most, on a more fair and more equitable basis, so the people who are truly unemployed can have the easiest and most convenient access to the money.

In so far as the information from regional economists is concerned, again I can give basically the same answer I gave to the previous member, that I will inquire into the possibility of obtaining that information in keeping with the spirit and the practice of freedom of information.

Supply

I should say, as I have on other programs such as immigration, unemployment insurance and employment, that I will use as my guide the freedom of information bill to determine that information which is to be disclosed, and there is a presumption in its favour, and that information which must be withheld because it may be in the area of advice or representations to the executive and thereby exempt, as clearly determined by statute.

To the extent the freedom of information regime permits me to make information available, I will endeavour to do so. I want to warn the hon. member that the freedom of information exemptions are also binding on me in my present practice, as they soon will be in terms of law when it becomes the law of the land.

Mr. Dick: Mr. Chairman, I thank the minister very much for his comments. The only thing I want to say is that I would not be looking forward to forecasts from the regional economists or from the regional manpower centres because they may be in the area of hypothetical projections into the future. I would suggest if they have some statistics based on what is the present fact or the present situation, rather than projections three months or six months into the future, that is probably the kind of information I would want. I will take all the information I can get, but I will take information on the existing facts quite happily. I appreciate the minister's undertaking, and I just wanted to mention that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ouellet: Mr. Chairman, I wish to intervene this afternoon to follow on the remarks of my colleague from Matapédia-Matane, whose rather simple and direct questions were completely eluded by the minister who did not answer as directly and honestly as we would have expected him to do. The attitude of the minister seems curious to me. I think that through his evasiveness this afternoon he lost many points in public opinion. The minister would have everything to gain by being open, according to the motto of his leader who talks constantly of a new open government in Canada. In skirting the questions of the hon. member for Matapédia-Matane the minister succeeded only in creating doubts in members' minds who listened to him, particularly in the minds of Canadians watching our proceedings on television.

I do not understand why the minister abolished the consultative committees that had been established to act as consultants in the ridings, to inform and help the government make decisions. The minister did not give any explanation for abolishing the consultative committees. Will they be replaced by a single consultant, that is the Progressive Conservative candidate defeated at the last election, or the new Progressive Conservative member elected to the House? We read in the throne speech, Mr. Chairman, that the government wanted to give greater importance to members of Parliament. Up to now the only importance they have been granted was a reward to a few Progressive Conservative members by naming them to some study groups on agriculture and transport. We have seen