

Unemployment Insurance Act

or four months, the amount of benefits he receives cannot, in my opinion, cover his needs and enable him to make ends meet.

That act has been useful since its coming into force and it still is—I repeat that I am not against the principle of this social legislation—but I think that in 1968, more positive formulas should be devised to help not only individuals but also the community as a whole.

Since I have been here, I have often heard, and especially when the Unemployment Insurance Act was under consideration, that the government could, perhaps, find other formulas which, as I said earlier, could be more beneficial to the whole community.

At that time, Mr. Speaker, they called it "work-insurance". Of course, hon. members objected to it then. They said that a work-insurance law would be a first step towards socialism and as such should be rejected. However, whatever name we give it, I think that, in 1968, we should pass a law which, while helping the unemployed, would at the same time allow the community to benefit from the money which is designed to help people when they do not find a job in a particular season.

I will give you an example. Assuming that in a particular area, the unemployment insurance fund amounts to \$500,000, \$600,000 or \$1 million, the government could administer the money in such a way as to pay benefits to those who are entitled to them and at the same time undertake projects in the municipalities which encounter major financial problems.

Those projects would give work to the unemployed who would collect in salaries what they would otherwise have received in unemployment insurance. While being of personal advantage to the unemployed, those expenditures would also serve to build something for our municipalities which, as I said a while ago, have serious problems with regard to the industrial projects and developments that fall within their jurisdiction.

If our municipalities are to be helped, I feel the minister should consider this formula, even though my talking about it makes him laugh.

● (4:40 p.m.)

I think that in 1968, we should have enough imagination to make welfare legislation beneficial to the whole community and not only to individuals. I would like to point that

[Mr. Asselin (Charlevoix).]

fact out to the minister who is very busy with 464,000 needy unemployed.

Mr. Speaker, during the past year, the minister has also decided to centralize unemployment offices. There has been one in my constituency for over 25 years; it has rendered great services to our people and I think that the principle, adopted by the minister or his department and under which unemployment insurance offices are to be centralized as much as possible, should not apply to every where in the country. In my opinion, consideration must be given to the geographic location of the areas in which unemployment offices are situated and I must add that the centralization of unemployment offices in our district will not serve people who draw unemployment benefits.

We have been told that next June, the unemployment insurance office of the Murray Bay region will be centralized in Quebec city. That will be most inconvenient in view of our somewhat special geographical position and the fact that, during winter, travel is most difficult, to the point that, very often, because of delays in mail delivery, people receive their unemployment cheque a week or ten days late. The minister should consider that for the head of a family waiting for his cheque to receive it a week or ten days late may be a major inconvenience.

The centralisation of unemployment insurance offices in the Quebec city area will of course eliminate the one now existing in the Murray Bay area and people will have to write to Quebec city. I must say to the minister that some people will have to cover a distance of 110, 120 or 125 miles to get to that office and the uncertainties of travel, the delays in mail delivery will surely be highly prejudicial to those who draw unemployment insurance benefits.

I, therefore, beseech the minister to ask his officials to reconsider their decision concerning the closing of the unemployment insurance office in the Charlevoix area, at La Malbaie. Perhaps the minister could ask his officials to make a more detailed study of the situation. Even if the centralization principle is a good one in general terms, I say that in given areas it is detrimental to those who receive benefits under the unemployment insurance act.

I entreat the minister to take my remarks into consideration and to ask his officials to reconsider the decision to close the unemployment office in La Malbaie area.