

Unemployment Insurance Act

is not entitled to the supplement because of his earnings. He generally gets the maximum amount of pension and a few dollars of supplement. Therefore, the minister's suggestion that a person in the labour force can get a pension over \$200 is misleading. The Quebec offices of the official, Mr. Gérard Turbide, can confirm that. The supplement is granted according to revenues. The basic pension is paid equally to every citizen. The minister wants to persuade workers over 65 to retire, because OAS pensions are based not on the current year's revenues but on those of the previous year. This tends to show how unfair the minister's proposal is. The income supplement given a worker in 1975 is based on his 1974 revenues. Assuming a worker aged 65 retired on January 1, 1976, he would be without revenues other than the basic old age security pension. He would then get a supplement application form in which he would have to declare his 1974 revenues. Therefore, he would not be entitled to supplement for that year as of 1976, so long as a new computation was not made. Such is the current situation. I hear some members opposite say this is not true. Well, I will not debate this. Tomorrow, I shall try to meet them and show them examples I have of this. It would be astounding if they wished to remedy this, because it is schedules.

An hon. Member: That is optional.

Mr. Fortin: That may be optional, however, that is compulsory retirement. I wonder if the minister checked in the labour market to get employers' opinion. A number of employers will regret that. People of 65 who still want to work and still have the courage to do so are generally excellent workers who give great satisfaction to their employers. This is a recognized fact. Most of them work not for the fun of it, but only because they have insufficient means.

Madam Speaker, I hope that the minister will take it upon himself to withdraw completely this proposal and leave things as they are. We should respect the worker who has worked all his life and leave the age at 70. Of course, if the minister does not want to do it himself, I shall be forced to oppose the bill completely in view of the enormous social repercussions that it will have on those who are 65.

As the previous speaker said, we have been using ringing phrases like "just society". Can a single member of the government tell me that it is just, after 50 or 40 years of work, to take away all the rights of a worker only because to his age even if he still wants to work for the good of his country? If they can justify this bill from the point of view of justice and fairness, Madam Speaker, I shall have to accept it since they have the majority, and this would be regrettable. But I do not believe that the government members can defend this bill.

The last point I wanted to make is as follows: in 1974, at least 265,831 workers were penalized for having voluntarily quit their job. In the legislation proposed by the minister, the waiting period is doubled, which means that any one quitting his job will, in principle, have to wait eight weeks before receiving his first cheque. Madam Speaker, I have myself very often been before the arbitration board with my fellow citizens to defend their rights.

● (1730)

In almost 99.9 per cent of all cases where my people were accused of quitting voluntarily, we won our case and the commission ruled in our favour. But in all cases, never did an employer come himself to give his own version. Two weeks ago, I went before the board of referees in Drummondville. A certain employer maintained that a young lady had quit her job in a beauty parlor. That employer had sent a letter to downgrade completely the young hairdresser. When we showed up before the board of referees, there were the members of the board, the claimant, the secretary of the board and myself. The employer was not there. Even though he had condemned the young lady and had put her in a defensive position before the board, under an unduly complicated law, that man was absent. He had not even been invited or summoned. To have his revenge because he was losing a good employee and I suppose because he had not accepted the wage demands of the employee—another possible reason—the employer had written a letter which was against the interest of a young lady who had worked for him for three years.

In any case, Madam Speaker, that proves that if the minister really wants to have a truly effective legislation, which will prompt workers to keep their job, he must give claimants better protection against those who could abuse.

If we are going to adopt that part of the legislation against which I have nothing in principle, it remains that employers now wield an extraordinary weapon. They will be able to provoke their employees particularly where there is no union and we know that in my riding in Quebec many workers are not organized. Employers will be able to provoke their employees for any kind of reason knowing full well that no employee will dare quit his job lest he lose his income for eight weeks. And as the claimant has the onus of proving that he did not leave his job voluntarily and without cause, inevitably any fault is considered his but never the employer's.

I deplore, I must admit, such coercive measures which are very harsh and in which the employer has no role to play. When an employee is hired there are always two persons involved, he and the employer. When people work in factories, there are always two groups, the employers and the employees. But when somebody is laid off, the decision rests on one, the employer while the employee depends on this decision.

If an employee leaves his job, here again we find two parties—the employer and the employee. Who decided the employee should leave? To be fair in applying such a rigorous legislation, one should instruct each employer that every time an employee voluntarily leaves his job he should produce his version of the facts and even appear before the board of referees and justify the reasons why the employee left and why he was put by the employer in a situation where he was forced to leave his job.

With this eight-week system, we are going to see a number of abuses, particularly among the workers, if we fail to give them the protection they require. Madam Speaker, I was reading, I cannot remember exactly where, that last year 144,000 unemployment insurance claimants had been declared ineligible by the CMC because they had