

Expedition of Public Services

tape. An outlying area may be two or three days behind and have to go over a number of these tapes. This is very expensive and causes difficulty. If someone telephones for information they cannot get a reply because it takes so long to find it and, of course, the person answering the telephone has no connection with the particular section responsible for the computer.

• (1740)

Mr. Perrault: You are badly confused.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, I handle many more cases than the parliamentary secretary does, so I am familiar with this matter. He is not familiar with anything. He is just an apologist for the government. He has been that kind of apologist since his election and that is what he will continue to be. He knows only what he is told by an official of his department, so sometimes he is able to convey sensible information to the House.

Mr. Perrault: You are misleading your constituents. You don't know what you are talking about.

Mr. Peters: The Unemployment Insurance Commission should have a computer system similar to that used by Air Canada for reservations, so that when information on a claim is requested it can be retrieved from the memory bank. That should have been done in the first place and I hope it will be done now. There are other delays, Mr. Speaker. The office that I deal with is at least 50 per cent understaffed.

Mr. Perrault: I think it is some of the poor advice you are giving to your constituents.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, my constituents will worry about that when the time comes.

An hon. Member: We want them to get their money.

Mr. Peters: I would like them to get their money and every municipality in my area would like them to get their money. Many of the municipalities are rural and they cannot afford to pay these people; they just do not have the funds. There are at least a dozen letters from the unemployment insurance office in Kirkland Lake demanding some sort of courtesy to that office. Kirkland Lake has an unreasonably heavy unemployment insurance load and it cannot afford to pay the claims made in the form of welfare payments. True, Ontario has an assignment but when a person draws less than two-thirds of his former wages in unemployment insurance, and many of the unemployed are in that category, he cannot go four paydays without money and therefore he goes to the municipality for welfare.

This is a point that bears investigation, Mr. Speaker. Toronto is in a different category from other areas because it has an unemployment insurance district office and people can go there in person. Areas outside the major cities operate entirely by mail and this presents another problem involving the post office. This afternoon I was talking to a member who indicated that on occasion he can get a letter in British Columbia within a day, but a very important letter on one occasion took nine days.

An hon. Member: That is not unusual.

[Mr. Peters.]

Mr. Perrault: There was an air strike.

Mr. Peters: It would not be so bad if that happened all the time because then you would know it takes nine days. But in another case where air is not involved the Unemployment Insurance Commission in Belleville mailed five letters on Monday, five on Tuesday, five on Wednesday, five on Thursday and five on Friday. The office in Timmins got two letters on Tuesday, four on Wednesday, two on Thursday, three or four on Friday and the balance the following Monday. How can a thing like that happen, Mr. Speaker? They put it in the mailbox, onto the sorting table then onto the truck and then on the second day you get two letters. These letters were specially prepared by the Unemployment Insurance Commission, but of course the parliamentary secretary would not know anything about that because he has not been told by his officials.

Mr. Perrault: Did you contact the postal workers?

Mr. Peters: You cannot blame the unemployment insurance people for that but you can certainly blame the government. When you put an eight-cent stamp on a letter, if you knew it was going to take eight or nine days to get to British Columbia you would think about operating a special airline. And what about the letter that takes one day? How did the two letters get from Belleville to Timmins in one day and some did not arrive until the following week? These are simple problems, Mr. Speaker, and people want to know the answers.

Mr. Perrault: Have you written to the post office?

Mr. Peters: Then I would be in the same position as everybody else.

An hon. Member: They would never get the letter.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Speaker, several weeks ago I asked the post office for some literature and suggested that I would send a messenger for it. They said they would put it in the mail and that I would get it right away. Well, they did and four or five days later I had to send a messenger to get it. About a week later it arrived in the mail. They had put it in a brown envelope and you know the people who handle the mail do not like touching those.

Mr. Perrault: Are you sure you put a stamp on it?

Mr. Peters: I didn't send it, Mr. Speaker; the post office sent it to me. I did not have anything to do with putting a stamp on it.

An hon. Member: He just doesn't understand anything.

Mr. Peters: The point is that in a modern society we have to speed up processes. There are ways of doing things that will cause little displacement in the life of the average individual I may be wrong, but I believe that rather than keep two plans going the Unemployment Insurance Commission should have had two systems going. When a person phones saying that it is four or five weeks since he sent in his form and he has not heard anything, there should be another side to the unemployment insurance system, as there once was, where the matter could be dealt with by hand.