

Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971

years an individual has worked for five different employers and unfortunately has lost his own records. The present regulations require him to keep his records. That individual goes from one job to another. At best when we are faced with this situation we have a 50-50 proposition. Many individuals who have been fully employed for years all too frequently just assume they will never be unemployed and forget about their records. Possibly they do not realize their own obligation. An individual of this type will come into an unemployment insurance office and ask for his benefits for 52 weeks which he feels he should draw because he has been employed for four years, but he has no proof of past employment.

Some members have talked about abuses to the fund. If we are to prevent abuses we must at the same time make sure which people are entitled to benefit. This involves a matter of judgment. I could speak at some length about some of the arguments that have been presented, but I am pleased to note that many of the remarks of a member of one party have nullified the remarks of another member of that same party. Some members in the official opposition talked about universality. I believe the hon. member from Halifax endorsed the introduction of teachers into the plan, while others have been opposed. Perhaps if the time were available I might suggest that they read each other's speeches. The same thing happened in respect of the NDP.

I think we have a moral obligation to fishermen. We have helped them out for 10 or 12 years. We must make sure they remain in the unemployment insurance plan until an equal or better plan is devised. There might be a slight difference of opinion in the NDP, but from the contributions to the debate I would have to say that the official stand of that party is to keep the fishermen in the plan as long as there is no better system.

In so far as maternity benefits are concerned, again I think the general position of speakers for the NDP, with one exception, is that we should pay benefits to those people who are temporarily without work as a result of a pregnancy. I might remind hon. members that our research indicates that over a million women in the work force today are there for no other reason than to add to the family income. This sometimes means the difference between poverty and existence. When such a person becomes pregnant, you can envisage the terrible hardship this can invoke on an individual family. Very often the husband is a semi-invalid. There are many reasons for women working. It is too easy to generalize by saying they are working for pin money, for a second television or automobile.

There are many points I could raise. I do not know what the feeling of hon. members is, whether they want me to go beyond six o'clock or provide answers in committee.

Mr. Alexander: Answer in committee.

Mr. Mackasey: I will try to answer a few more points in the next three or four minutes. I have had no less than 18 meetings with school teachers' groups. I cannot get overly excited about the concern of boards of trustees. If

[Mr. Mackasey.]

I had the time I would indicate the exact additional burden placed on the school board by employer contributions as compared to the wage demands made by teachers over the next few years. I am hoping concern of the teachers is such that they will show some responsibility the next time they enter collective bargaining for increased wages to which, no doubt, they are entitled. When you look at the fact that across Canada the allocation to school boards in various provinces runs to \$2 billion, and that out of that this new burden to the school board will be .38 of 1 per cent, that argument is very ridiculous. It is obvious that it has been introduced by certain school teachers in the hope that their trustees might take up the battle for them.

I think it was the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) who said quite adequately and eloquently today that all this will fall back on the taxpayer. I admit that. This is the same taxpayer who today finances the Canada Assistance Plan. Under this insurance plan, we will take a burden to the extent of \$80 million from the Canada Assistance Plan because the increased benefits will make it possible for people drawing unemployment insurance at lower levels not to have this supplemented by welfare in order to exist. Their unemployment insurance benefits will be high enough to put them past the threshold at which they are eligible for welfare.

I can promise hon. members that they will have an opportunity to participate and be heard in respect of this plan. Our efforts and desires are to help people. We have already arranged to make it possible to overcome some of the limitations of the computer. We will be able to find out within 24 hours why a person's card has been rejected. We are doing this through the use of microfilm and other methods of communication now available.

In so far as making this plan truly universal by covering the self-employed, every country that has an unemployment insurance plan has tried to do this without success. The only place this exists now is in England and it is done there by way of a means test. I do not think we want to introduce that in this country.

We have talked about teachers and professionals. We must remember that many doctors, lawyers, scientists, engineers and many other professionals work in large numbers for an identifiable employer, whether that employer be government, private institutions or a collective professional enterprise, and they will pay unemployment insurance. It will only be the truly one-man operation that will not pay. We will even be able to bring in some of those through regulation if we can find ways and means of identifying them, as we have done with the fishermen who are classed as employees rather than self-employed people.

I do not want to take up any more time and I wish to thank members for their courtesy in letting me get this bill through today. I can understand some members have had to curtail their opportunity to speak. They will be able to take advantage of this opportunity later on. We are meeting tomorrow with the ministers of labour from the provinces on a general basis rather than just in respect of unemployment insurance, so I am pleased to