

*Private Members' Business*

member for solving this problem is not one which the government can responsibly support.

The most basic difficulty is this. An extension of the unemployment insurance to cover these circumstances would render the program incompatible with the fundamental purpose of unemployment insurance. Unemployment insurance is designed to insure workers in Canada who have lost their jobs so that they can look for employment. It is structured and financed on the basis of certain assumptions.

When one works in the Canadian job market, one insures oneself for loss of work in that job market. Employers and workers pay into a fund to grant protection in these circumstances. If a person decides for one reason or another to live and work in another market, in another country, he or she is no longer covered. In that respect, the Canadian system is the same as the system in other countries. That is the way it works in the U.K., the United States, France, Germany and a multitude of other countries that operate unemployment insurance programs.

The second problem has to do with the basic criteria which apply not only to the spouses of service people, but to everyone who participates in the UI system. The fact that an applicant pays premiums and then loses his or her job does not automatically entitle them to unemployment insurance. One must be eligible and have met two basic conditions.

First, it is necessary to show that the applicant is actively and continuously trying to find another job. It is incumbent upon every person claiming benefits to confirm this on a bi-weekly basis.

Second, if a job does come along, one must be in a position to accept it.

Let us examine each of these requirements in the context of the particular situation referred to in the motion.

In the first case, I would argue that the need for an applicant to show that he or she is looking for work is not only reasonable, it is fair. That could be said because it applies, not just to one group, but everyone who participates in the program.

If we are to exercise a responsible degree of control, we need to enforce this basic requirement.

The question that arises is how can someone living in a different country and in a different job market meet this requirement. In the case of Canadian service personnel or his or her spouse posted in the United States, that obstacle can be surmounted.

Since the early 1960s, we have had a reciprocal arrangement with the United States. It allows continued coverage by the UI systems of both countries for the spouses of federal and military personnel serving across their home borders. Control is not a problem in that situation. American UI authorities have agreed to verify that Canadians in their system are in fact looking for work and that work is available. Once that is confirmed, the cheque is issued here in Canada.

Similarly, our Canadian employment centres perform roughly the same function for American workers on this side of the border. The system benefits both countries because there is a substantial exchange of human resources in both directions. It works well because we are neighbouring countries with similar labour markets and we are willing to make arrangements that are easy to administer.

Unfortunately these conditions do not apply to other countries in which Canada has military personnel. We have no such reciprocal arrangements with them. How could the spouse of a service man or service woman posted to Germany or Cyprus fulfil the requirement that he or she is looking for work? The machinery for verification just does not exist.

Let me now turn to that second requirement, namely that the applicant for UI is in fact a valid candidate for employment; that he or she can accept work. How do you meet that requirement? The answer is simple; you don't and you can't. In most cases, the wives and husbands of military personnel are not eligible to work in the host economy. They may be eligible to work on Canadian military establishments overseas, but eligibility to work for a foreign employer is limited. Exceptions can be made, work permits may be offered, but it is not automatic and it requires special authorization. It is granted only for selected occupations.

It may be said that we are mostly talking about work on Canadian bases overseas. Let us be realistic, not many