

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

**Mr. Guay (St. Boniface):** A point of order, Mr. Speaker, I should like to say that the hon. gentleman who is now speaking uses more of the facilities of this House than anybody else, and has accepted the salary and is always talking about it.

● (1720)

**Mr. Rodriguez:** That is exactly my point. These are exactly the same birds who will turn around and say that giving the unemployed advance pay is a disincentive to work.

**Mr. Guay (St. Boniface):** You are preaching to the wrong people.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** No, I am preaching to the right people. If the government wants to introduce a restraint program, let it show those who are eligible for advance pay claims that it is putting its money where its mouth is. Yes, let us bring in a bill either to defer members' increases or cancel them altogether. You talk about restraint. That is the kind of restraint I want to see from the other side.

**An hon. Member:** Silence.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** An hon. member says, "silence."

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Epp:** You had better explain yourself to the poor.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** And you had better go back to your samovar.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner (London East)):** Order, please. Would the hon. member please address the Chair.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Who are these people whose incomes we want to restrain? We discovered in committee that 70 per cent of those on unemployment insurance earn \$6,000 a year or less; and we are moving in on them. Earlier in the debate we saw how the government wants to restrain the less fortunate, those 65 years old and over. Yes, it is moving in on those people, too. It has already moved in on low income earners by cutting back the dependency allowance. Wasn't that a fine thing to do? The government wants to restrain the little people, the women and children, those 65 years old and over, and the poor.

Consider the people of the area I represent. The minister knows what kind of people they are. He represents a northern Ontario constituency and knows what it is like. He knows how poor the area is. As soon as a person loses his job and applies for help from the Unemployment Insurance Commission, he is told that he must actively seek work.

**Mr. Epp:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Rodriguez:** He must do that first. The hon. member to my right has complained about people being forced to travel from the farm to the city to look for work.

**Mr. Epp:** Me?

**Mr. Rodriguez:** Yes, you.

**Mr. Epp:** I did not.

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

**Mr. Rodriguez:** As I say, the commission says to the people, "You must actively seek work." But if a person is poor, how can he move around? We know that he lacks assets in the bank. How can he survive the next two weeks of waiting, let alone afford money for travel? How can he travel around looking for work? The mobility program is to be limited because the government claims its resources are limited. The Department of Manpower and Immigration, which also falls under the minister's responsibility, is cutting back its mobility program and no longer willing to move people around the country. So here we have low income earners who more than likely do not belong to a union, are not protected by collective bargaining, and are at the bottom of the income scale, being told to seek work actively. The advance pay program would enable them to make ends meet. But this must be done properly. I suspect that the experiment the minister and his nabobs carried out was not well promoted.

I wonder how many in my constituency are aware of the advance pay program. When people fall six to eight weeks behind in benefits they have the devil of a time getting their local office to write cheques and keep them off the welfare rolls. The program is no good if it is inadequately promoted. If people do not know about a program, the government can say that the program was not popular and not successful. Therefore, if you are to introduce an advance pay program you must promote it among the unemployed. Low income earners need advance pay in order to seek work actively. Only recently have local UIC offices been given authority to write cheques to claimants who have such a need. Indeed, the problems in my area were so great that it was necessary for me to meet the regional director of the area, the local manager and the UIC commissioner, in my office in the Confederation Building in order to straighten out some of the difficulties the local office is encountering. I am referring to the willingness of the office to issue cheques to claimants in need.

Obviously, in times of high unemployment jobs are scarce and the need for the advance pay program is greatest. Those with the least education and skills will most likely be unemployed, or the longest out of work, especially in areas of traditionally high unemployment. Those lacking skills are the most difficult to employ; those, therefore, will stay longest on unemployment insurance. Therefore, the minister's statistics are not surprising. So by and large we are dealing with poor people, with people who are poor materially and poor in skills.

When the advance pay program was first introduced in 1971, between 3.8 per cent and 4 per cent of our work force was unemployed. If the rationale behind the program was valid then, how much more valid is it now when unemployment is on the rise and people are losing jobs through no fault of their own? What do people mean by disincentives? Falconbridge announced that it will lay off 450 people in the Sudbury basin. They did not ask to be laid off. Falconbridge has received grants from the government, retraining grants from Canada Manpower and DREE grants for its plant at Bécancour, Quebec. All the same, the company will lay off some 450 people in the new year. Really, I do not know what people mean by incentives. I suppose it depends on how you look at it. If the advance pay program were properly promoted and used, it would