

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

almost to the very moment of confinement and claiming those weeks thereafter. So this is strictly a matter of the mother's health. This is a decision to be made by the physician and the mother. And what we have there is someone who is contributing to the unemployment insurance scheme and is thus insuring her job. And this covers maternity cases.

Now where adoption is involved, is there a need that unemployment insurance benefits be the same as in maternity cases? A one-, two- or three-year old child, for instance, does not require the same kind of care as a newborn child. And if within the family there is help for the mother, for the family, is there a need to have benefits for a foster child? Because if one or two or three children are cared for, unemployment insurance benefits may not be required. Because in such a case, one receives family allowances and, in addition, the tax credit for children, and that is where the distinction must be made. The proposed legislation does not make this distinction. I will conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, because time is running out—

● (1815)

[English]

**Mr. Benjamin:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Would the Hon. Member permit a couple of quick questions while he is completing his remarks?

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin):** Would the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary accept to answer questions?

**Mr. Maltais:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

[English]

**Mr. Benjamin:** Does the Hon. Member realize that this Bill has been on the Order Paper for some six years or more, in my name for the past three years and in the name of a former Member of Parliament for three or four years prior to that? He should realize this when he talks about the Department's considering the matter.

Also, does he realize that the Bill indicates that only people and their employers who have paid UIC premiums would be entitled to benefits as adoptive parents? All the other matters he is raising are totally irrelevant.

[Translation]

**Mr. Maltais:** Mr. Speaker, firstly, I agree with the Hon. Member for Regina West that the Department does not act very quickly. Moreover, I also agree that after six years of studies, it would seem to me that results should be coming. However, the Minister is presently indicating that, first the Department is moving at a faster pace in finalizing the research, the studies aimed at establishing the difference between the various situations I was referring to earlier. Second, I am fully aware, and that is underlined in the Bill proposed by the Hon. Member for Regina West, that, obviously, the person who is entitled to unemployment insurance benefits already has insurable employment, although presently,

maternity benefits are much more related to a person's health situation than to an adoption case. There is a distinction to be made between these two situations. When you adopt a child who is two, three or four years old and when you already can count on help at home, does the child really need as much attention as if the mother had actually given birth to the child? In my opinion, there are distinctions to be made. That is what the Department is presently considering in a final evaluation, Mr. Speaker, before arriving at a final decision on the suggestion made by the Hon. Member for Regina West.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill):** Mr. Speaker, I rise briefly in support of the Bill to say how ironic and irritating it is to listen to Government Members complain about alleged inadequacies of the Bill, giving them as their reasons for not wanting it to be read a second time and sent to committee. As the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin) pointed out, if they did not like the way this Bill was written, they have had some six years in which they could have brought in and tabled a Bill of their own that addressed some of the matters raised.

We clearly have here an attempt by the Government to prevent this Bill from going to Committee, to prevent its subject matter from being considered and to prevent any changes in the unemployment insurance legislation that would eliminate the discrimination which now exists against adoptive parents. If Government Members have that intention, why do they not just be honest with the Canadian people and come out and say so, rather than pretending that they sympathize with the Bill and agree with this or that? They will keep talking until the hour has expired in order to prevent it from going to Committee. That is exactly what I do not intend to do. I would like to continue, but I will not as I want this matter to go to Committee.

I hope the Government will have some second thoughts and let the matter go to Committee. What harm could be done by allowing this Bill to go to Committee so that Members of Parliament have an opportunity to discuss it and make some decisions regarding it? I have had constituents write to me on this issue and I have written to them indicating my support. In fact, I wrote to the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) on the matter. There is no doubt a consensus within the House that some changes need to be made which would eliminate all discrimination. Why does the Government keep stonewalling the Bill? Why not let it go to committee?

● (1820)

**Mr. Jack Masters (Thunder Bay-Nipigon):** Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the concern of Members opposite who ask why we should not discuss this and let it go to committee when collectively we seem to be saying the same thing. We like some of the thoughts expressed in the Bill. As has been pointed out, it has been around for a good number of years in one form or another, so why talk it out now and procrastinate further?