

*Expedition of Public Services*

will soon be a change in this proportion. Nevertheless, those are the facts. Five years ago the work force was much smaller than it is now. What has that work force been trying to do? Here we have an earning stream and there we have an income stream. This relatively small group of people who make up our work force have been educated in an expensive educational system. It is expensive because we wanted the best, the very largest flow of young people making up the population, on a proportional basis, of any country in the western world. They are now being educated at the most expensive level, the post-secondary level. That contribution and that burden we must recognize.

Secondly, this relatively small work force is supporting a relatively highly developed social security system and retirement system for persons over 65. I will not say it is the best in the world; others have said that and perhaps it is. We know that it is a substantial and good retirement program. The social security program is also substantial. The burden of carrying these programs rests on our relatively small work force. In time the distribution of that burden will be corrected. I wanted to remind hon. members that middle-income people of this country have played a large part in bearing the heavy burden which Canadians must bear. I trust that they can continue to bear the weight involved in some of these changes and unique challenges that face Canada.

The government is making determined efforts, partly through its industrial strategy, to so enlarge economic opportunities that all, including those performing professional, academic, managerial and other skilled tasks will be rewarded with an expanding future. At present middle-income citizens are carrying a great burden. However, as new people enter the work force the weight of that burden will be spread ever more evenly and borne by more people.

I do not want to say much more, Mr. Speaker. I merely want to remind hon. members that we are going through an exceptional period in Canada's social development. It is exceptional particularly in terms of the numbers who in this country are available for employment. To provide employment opportunities, of course, is a top priority of the government. The government recognizes that the traditional methods of bringing about employment opportunities and therefore an improved quality of life must be changed. It has launched new programs and is evaluating them to assure the country that they are not stopgap efforts but, rather, are the beginnings of major efforts to cope with this unique situation. Having said that, I say to the mover of the motion that no momentum is lost through this thrust. Perhaps all we shall lose is a little currency. The action is there, if I may use that phrase, and will increase.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** That is a nice choice of words, a beautiful vocabulary.

**Mr. William Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand):** Mr. Speaker, before speaking to the motion may I say a word or two about the speech of the Minister of Labour (Mr. O'Connell). He suggested that the Economic Council of Canada forecast that 50 per cent more persons will be entering our labour force in 15 years. That is true and we are aware of

[Mr. O'Connell.]

it. I say, then, was it not utter folly on the part of the government to adopt a policy which would create unemployment? Was it not foolish to adopt such a policy as its number one weapon in fighting inflation?

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand):** I want to address myself in particular to these words of the motion: "payment of benefits may be sooner established and paid, and in particular, in respect of unemployment insurance benefits, pension and assistance benefits." I wish to touch on three major aspects involving the Unemployment Insurance Commission, the administration of the program for which the commission is responsible, veterans' pensions and benefits paid under the Canada Pension Plan. I should first like to deal with the program of the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

There has been much repetition in this debate and hon. members have raised the same problems about which I intend to speak. Unravelling the problems of people trying to get unemployment insurance benefits takes far too much of the time of members of this House no matter where they sit.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand):** Some members have hired extra help to handle nothing but unemployment insurance claims. I represent a rural area where you would not expect such difficulties, yet hardly a day goes by when I receive no calls for assistance. Sometimes I receive 15 requests for assistance in a day and rarely are there fewer than three or four such requests. As I say, these calls come from a rural area. While criticizing the Unemployment Insurance Commission's over-all program, let me pay tribute to the excellent service that officials in regional offices have rendered to members of parliament. My area is served by Hamilton and the people in that office have been co-operative in trying to solve the problems of my constituents.

**Mr. Alexander:** How true.

**Mr. Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand):** The terrible thing is that some individuals who seek redress from the commission cannot get the time of day from some offices. I talked to a man who tried to telephone the Hamilton unemployment insurance office for six hours. He timed his calls. Finally he called the operator and asked if the office telephone was out of order. She said no, it was not. The only thing left for him was to call his member of parliament.

The delays in putting cheques into the hands of the unemployed are bringing serious consequences to local municipalities. One such serious consequence is the increase in municipal welfare costs. When I met welfare officers of Norfolk county they said that this was a common problem. They told me that they were being asked to make welfare payments to those who were not able to get their unemployment insurance cheques. When the cheques eventually arrive the recipients are paid twice, so to speak, once from the Unemployment Insurance Commission and once from welfare funds.