

Employment and Immigration

go before the umpire without asking for the permission of the chairman of the board.

Just imagine! When the decision is unanimous you have to ask the chairman of the board of referees for permission to get a new hearing or go before the referee. That does not make sense. The chairman of the board of referees just made a decision after eight or ten days and he is told that his decision is no good, they want permission to appeal. He always says no. He does not say so himself but he has an official of the Commission say it for him. So that is the result of the red tape from legislation that gives trouble to unemployed workers.

About the individual I was talking about earlier let us see what the members of the board of referees say: In this case, the availability of the claimant—and this is not happening in Rivière-du-Loup but in Lévis—is related to the recovery from an illness he had in the fall of 1976. The claimant's file is all mixed up, according to the claimant, his doctor, the examining doctor from the Commission and another doctor mentioned in the file. The availability of the claimant is really related to the medical evidence given in the file. But today, the claimant says that he was admitted to the Hôtel-Dieu Hospital in Lévis. This is true. He was sick for 15 weeks.

While confined there, he was told that he could go back to work in December 1976. In fact, he felt well enough to work in December 1976, but his regular doctor, to be sure that he was all right, told him to wait until January 20. The claimant says that he was examined at Laval Hospital and that he again saw his regular doctor in January and that he saw Dr. Mignault in December, January and February. But our files show very little result from all these meetings with the claimant's doctor. Consequently, the board of referees upheld the decision of the commission.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but I must inform him that his time has expired. Nevertheless, he may go on with the unanimous consent of the House.

Some hon. Members: No.

[*English*]

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the motion to give this bill a six-months' hoist because I believe that the premise of the bill is wrong. It has one obvious purpose—to reduce the number of people entitled to draw unemployment insurance benefits. That would save the Government of Canada a very substantial amount of money, but at the expense of the individual and of the municipalities that will have to bear the cost of welfare support for many of the people who will cease to draw unemployment insurance benefits.

One has to assume that the government has brought this bill forward because it believes there are substantial numbers of the over 900,000 people unemployed who could find jobs but simply do not want to work. There cannot be any other reason for this bill. I cannot believe that even this Liberal government would be so cruel as to want to take people off unemployment

insurance benefits who are willing and able to work but who simply cannot find work because jobs are not available. An examination of the government's own statistics quickly shows that assumption to be false.

In May over 900,000 people were unemployed, according to the figures produced by Statistics Canada. We all know that a large number of people are out of work who are not included in this figure—people who have given up trying to find work because they know jobs are not available for their skills, or because they live in slow growth areas. According to Statistics Canada, in the month of May there were 35,300 job vacancies in Canada. That means that if every job was filled on the day the figures were taken, there would still be close to 900,000 people unemployed. The percentage of vacancies compared to the number of people unemployed is 4 per cent. In other words, for every 100 unemployed persons, only four jobs were available.

I might be able to understand the logic of introducing this bill if this high unemployment were a sudden phenomenon. And the government cannot claim it is introducing this bill because the unemployment insurance system was not meeting the needs of the people. If it makes such claims, they are not true.

● (1550)

The incidence of unemployment has been rising in the last few years. I shall not quote figures of the last two years, but I shall put on record figures relating to a few months in 1977. According to Statistics Canada, there were 932,000 unemployed in Canada in February, 1977, as compared with 800,000 unemployed in February, 1976; or seasonally adjusted, 7.9 per cent of the labour force was unemployed in February, 1977, as compared with 7 per cent in February, 1976. In Quebec, a province to which members have devoted considerable attention these past few months, there were 303,000 unemployed in February, 1977, as compared with 225,000 in February, 1976, almost 50,000 more people being unemployed this year. Is it any wonder a substantial proportion of people in Quebec have lost enthusiasm for Confederation, for one Canada? Instead of concentrating on bilingualism and language, as the government has done recently, it would be better advised to solve the problems of the economy.

The *Globe and Mail* of March 16, 1977, reported as follows:

The official number looking for work totalled a record 932,000 last month, according to Statistics Canada, raising the seasonally adjusted rate to 7.9 per cent. If other jobless who had not looked for work in the previous four weeks are included, the actual total of unemployed in Canada was well over a million.

Responding to criticism in the Commons, Finance Minister Donald MacDonald said the unemployed would receive 'substantial attention' in the budget planned for March 31.

And Manpower Minister J.S.G. Cullen told the opposition parties that it was no answer 'to react in panic' to the situation, especially since employment was still rising and the government has already announced make-work programs.

Speaking of work programs, I told the House the other night that the constituency of Winnipeg North Centre had received the grand total of \$100,000 this year for Canada Works, as compared with \$939,000 it received last year in LIP grants.

[Mr. Dionne (Kamouraska).]