

Unemployment Insurance Act

Canadians with a yearly income of up to \$7,800. The government wants to include as many people as possible in the compulsory contribution system.

There is nothing in Bill No. C-197 providing for changes to be made in the established methods of making more flexible the eligibility requirements of an unemployed worker. The protection of the fund is first provided for.

The rate of benefits shall increase in proportion to the gains made by the worker. Salaries, in many regions called economically underprivileged areas, are generally low. The increase in benefits will not therefore be proportional to the increase in the cost of living.

I am not against an adjustment in the rates of dues, benefits and non deducted gains. However, one must not forget that the principal aim of an unemployment insurance act is to help the unemployed. Noting that those who prepared Bill No. C-197 seem to have taken great pains to protect the fund rather than the unemployed, I conclude that this protective spirit will reveal itself especially through the inspectors of the commission who are often inclined to take a chance on spending \$100 in an attempt to find that a poverty stricken unemployed has received \$5 or \$10 too much in benefits.

To my mind, the most important thing the government should do, first of all, instead of paralysing construction through higher interest rates and taxes on building materials, is to undertake vast construction programs and build hospitals, old peoples' homes, rehabilitation centres for the handicapped of all ages and research centres.

The implementation of such programs would contribute to reducing unemployment and would be more in order than the introduction of medicare which will not give the people of this country one single additional doctor or hospital bed. How many other useful projects could be undertaken to reduce considerably the effects of that social evil which is called unemployment. Whether it be occasional, fractional, seasonal or chronic—those are the new words we have found since the act was passed in 1946—an unemployment period is always demoralizing for its victims.

That is why we should have an act, clearly drafted, with rules to enable understanding civil servants—I know there are some, I know many of them—to really help the unemployed through a humane application of a so-called social law.

[Mr. Dionne.]

High officials, civil servants, at middle or lower echelons, would do well to remember that they are the servants of the people and not their tyrants, that the people are individuals and not robots; in short, that the people pay them and that they expect from them services and not trouble.

A better act might keep them from evading the law of gravity, and let them keep both feet on the ground as well as keep them from getting swelled heads, which at times leads some of them to think too highly of themselves, with the result that the unemployed experience serious difficulties.

Not too long ago, we intervened through various means, including representations from local organizations, with a view to avoiding the concentration of unemployment offices in large centres. One of my colleagues pointed this out a while ago and I know it leads to inconvenience.

Mr. Speaker, this plan goes completely against the economic decentralization talked about when the designated area scheme was set up. While the government asks the industry to settle there, these same people would take the employees away from these areas.

The bill proposes to extend the act to cover agricultural workers. I fully approve of this decision, but it will be necessary to inform the unemployed of the procedure to be followed. I think the employees in the local offices can best answer the many requests for information.

Certain senior officials often proclaim that a high percentage of unemployed workers are without work because they do not have a grade 5, 6 or 7 education. However, the procedure to be followed in implementing the plan is unrealistic because it requires unemployed workers to fill out complicated forms which some officials take pleasure in drawing up in ever increasing numbers. To give an example of the kind of form which an unemployed person has to fill out, in various circumstances, I will mention a few from an average list I have here. These forms are sent to the unemployed and are sometimes difficult to fill out. Here are a few:

- Statement by the claimant;
- Application for unemployment insurance benefits by mail;
- Request for additional information;
- Notice of incomplete request for benefits;
- Report of claimant by mail;
- Notice of incomplete report;
- Application for employment by mail;