

and love which is necessary, particularly immediately after the infant child comes into the home.

I hope hon. members will give some consideration to this matter. It is not earth-shattering, given the problems we have in Canada today; nevertheless, it is one of those small matters which are very serious to the individuals concerned, and if there is an inequity it should be corrected. It may well be that proper investigation on the part of the responsible authorities within government would lead to the conclusion that it is just not practical to do it. I would accept that, but I will not accept it simply because somebody says so. Somebody is going to have to demonstrate to me that somebody has seriously looked at this problem and concluded that there is not an inequitable practice involved in this omission. If it is unjust, then let us correct it. If it is not unjust, then let someone tell me and tell Canadians who may be looking forward to adopting children why it is not unjust and why they should not have access to benefits under this particular program.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and hon. members, for your attention. I commend this motion to hon. members and look forward to hearing their comments and observations.

Mr. Chas. L. Caccia (Davenport): Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for bringing forward this motion. It is a thoughtful proposal, in my opinion, and it has been advanced by Canadians in many parts of the country. The hon. member is one of the few in the Conservative party who supports unemployment insurance. He once broke ranks with his party when in early 1973 there were some pretty serious debates and when serious punitive measures were being proposed by the party to which he belongs. I admired him at that time, and I admire him today for putting forward a measure at a time when everybody is talking about cutting down and reducing the social security measures we have in this country, including unemployment insurance.

In approaching this question we can ask ourselves, who would benefit from this measure? The theory being put forward by some commentators is that a distinction has to be drawn when a child is adopted because the adopting parent is not physically incapacitated, and therefore the parent does not really need this kind of recognition by society in the form of benefits. It seems to me that this is not really the question. The question is whether a child, whether adopted or not, is going to benefit by the presence of a parent—presumably the mother—for a number of weeks and possibly for a number of months. It is quite evident that a child would benefit from a measure of this kind by having the mother present for weeks and months taking care of him or her. Therefore, whether a child is adopted is really irrelevant. Children need care, and by adopting, a family takes on the responsibility for the present and future well-being of a child.

That responsibility will be carried out more successfully if one of the parents can afford to leave his or her employment at least for a few weeks or months, and in this regard I encourage the hon. member to pursue his line of thinking in a way which would give adoptive parents the same number of weeks of benefits as other parents. Surely from that viewpoint the best

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interests of the child would be served. Lengthier periods of benefits are desirable in either case.

Although there is in this country at the present time a declining birthrate, there may be an increase in the number of cases in this category, particularly if there is to be a tightening of rules permitting abortion, as I hope there will be. There is certainly a need to look into this field. There is a disturbing increase in the number of abortions taking place, and if the rules are to be tightened there will be an increase in the number of babies available for Canadians to adopt. Therefore, the hon. member raises a question which will be in the minds of many people who will ask themselves at the time of adoption what their rights and duties are when the adopted child is brought home.

There is another aspect to the proposal of the hon. member upon which I would like to touch briefly—and I am grateful for the opportunity—and that is that there is a need at this time to consider the benefits which are extended to mothers of premature babies. It is my understanding that in some cases mothers of premature babies are not entitled to benefits for the same length of time as mothers who have full-term children. Here again, in seeking the answer as to what is the best approach the basic question we can ask ourselves is, who is to benefit? I do not think we should be distracted by considering how the child became a member of his family. That is a decision for that family to make. We should ask ourselves what is in the best interests of the child at the time the family expands. Clearly, the answer is that to have the mother in the home for the longest period possible would work to the advantage of the child in developing a certain degree of self-confidence and a mutual relationship of understanding with the parent that stays at home and takes care of the child in its early life.

● (1720)

I conclude this brief intervention, Mr. Speaker, by saying that on this side of the House we are glad to see that there are some members of the Conservative party who see the Unemployment Insurance Act as a vehicle for income security in the life of Canadians. I am glad this has come from the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall). We will gratefully remember this intervention on his part when in committee and in debates in this House we hear his colleagues attack the government for taking a broad, general and social approach to unemployment insurance.

The hon. member comes from a part of the country where unemployment insurance plays a vital role in the life of individuals. He knows that, and so do his colleagues from the Atlantic region who broke ranks with their party in 1973 on the issue of unemployment insurance. We admired their courage at that time and we admire their deep-rooted social conscience which demonstrates that this government and this type of legislation is not only needed but is desirable for Canada.

Mr. J. Larry Condon (Middlesex-London-Lambton): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member who proposed this motion has