

*The Budget—Mr. Brown*

related to the effort of this department to effect a savings in its estimates. The department closed the unemployment insurance offices in various parts of the country. In spite of my strong opposition, Mr. Speaker, taken with the predecessor to the present Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey), who did not or would not listen to me but listened instead to his over-zealous officials, all of whom may have been more interested in preserving salary increases to themselves instead of being interested in the people of the country, the unemployment insurance office at Brantford, Ontario was closed, and was removed to Hamilton, Ontario. I need not remind members of the house that Brantford is a community of some 60,000 individuals, hard working, serious minded people who have lost the services of an office of the government of Canada which was vital to each of them. At the moment there is no office in Brantford to deal with unemployment insurance problems. The hard working people of Brantford have to go to Hamilton to discuss with officials there the individual problems they have. These problems pile up, particularly when the department rules against the claims made, and this is not infrequent. I can assure you that the claimants necessarily appeal and have to provide evidence. They write letters to Hamilton which go unanswered. Then they go over to Hamilton at considerable expense.

In the alternative, they make telephone calls to Hamilton, thereby running up considerable expense in telephone bills. Some people have reported to me at my house in Brantford that their telephone bills are running very high right now because of calls to Hamilton. First of all, they have to try to find the proper official who can deal with them, and then when they do find him they have to discuss their problem. By providing no service at all to the working people of Brantford in connection with unemployment insurance the government, inadvertently of course, is raising their taxes considerably.

The unemployment insurance authorities will not even send an official to Brantford for a minimum of two or three days a week to interview people and hear their complaints. As a matter of fact, the Unemployment Insurance Commission will not even instal a telephone service for Brantford residents so that a person would only have to dial the word "Zenith" to call the officials in Hamilton.

The result of this is that these people communicate with their member of parliament. I

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am therefore spending a large portion of my time, week in and week out during the sessions of parliament, answering people and promising to take up their complaints with these officials. I am becoming, as it were, a many-armed ombudsman for the people of the county of Brant. I do not mind giving this service. After all, it is my duty to assist them and I am ready to devote a large portion of each week to the performance of this duty when I should in fact be sitting in my seat listening to the debates, studying government estimates and generally acting as the true representative of the people of the county of Brant in the House of Commons. Let me warn the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey), that kind and understanding gentleman who happens to be a dear friend of mine—

● (8:10 p.m.)

**Mr. Nielsen:** You won't get any office that way.

**Mr. Brown:** I know, but I want to tell him that because I believe it—that he can expect to hear a good deal more from me in the next few weeks and months on the matter I have raised.

I should also like to say one or two words about hospital employees, Mr. Speaker. There are some 255,000 permanent and about 36,000 part time hospital employees in this country. You may not know, Mr. Speaker, that these people cannot qualify for unemployment insurance, but that is the case. They can qualify only if the hospital board that employs them permits them to apply as a group. Unfortunately, hospital boards are very often composed of active businessmen who, perhaps, suffer from a lack of social understanding. As a result they are frequently lax in seeing to it that their hospital employees are allowed to register for unemployment insurance. Under the law at present, unless the hospital board sanctions it, hospital employees cannot qualify for unemployment insurance.

It seems rather shocking to me, Mr. Speaker, that the Unemployment Insurance Act fails to provide for these people, and I fail to see the reason for their exemption from the provisions of the act. I suggest that an amendment to the act to correct this situation would mean a great deal to this large cross section of workers. After all, Mr. Speaker, what group does more in life than that which helps their fellowmen in hospital?

I should like to spend just a moment or two discussing the Canada assistance plan and how it operates in this day of top heavy bureaucracy. This plan is administered by the