

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

rate from August, 1978, to July, 1979, was 11. In the unemployment insurance region of Digby it was 8.4. Therefore there was a variable entrance requirement in order to receive benefits in Annapolis of ten and in Digby of 11. Looking at the regional extended benefit entitlement, you have 28 weeks in Annapolis and 18 in Digby. With regard to the repeaters provision, there was no exemption because the unemployment rate was not high enough in those areas to exclude the repeater provisions.

The Digby rate is heavily influenced by the Lunenburg area where unemployment is far less than in other counties in that economic or unemployment insurance region and the population is greater there than in other counties. I am sure the wages are also greater there. One must look beyond that unemployment insurance or economic region to the other regions. The commission should begin to take that into consideration.

In 1977 or 1978 the Yarmouth manpower office had approximately 12 per cent of the pay-outs for UI benefit in Nova Scotia, yet it is penalized by an unemployment insurance rate. When analysing statistics, we must look at the other side as well, namely, the labour surplus rate in the unemployment insurance region of Annapolis and that of Digby. The labour surplus rate is derived from the number of unemployment insurance beneficiaries as a proportion of the labour force in a given unemployment insurance or economic region.

In the August, 1978, to July, 1979, period, the labour surplus rate in South West Nova was 14.3 per cent. Compare that to the economic or unemployment insurance region of that area of 12.8 per cent, or the Annapolis unemployment insurance or economic region which was 11.8 per cent. The variable entrance requirement for Yarmouth or South West Nova was related to the unemployment insurance rate in the economic or unemployment area, not to the labour surplus rate. It would be distorting that figure because that economic region is heavily weighted because the Lunenburg area, as I said, is much better off.

I now wish to deal with the concerns I have in terms of application of the variable entrance requirement. The manpower offices are using statistics that are at least three months old. A unique problem develops. In December the unemployment insurance rate would be based on the variable entrance requirement for that area in September. In other words, the peak employment period in September is used in December. The statistics are three months old.

We then get to the other side. In May there may be a variable entrance requirement of ten weeks because the January unemployment rate, a high rate, is being used. Therefore someone in May now needs ten weeks in order to qualify for unemployment insurance. Using the September rate in December, when there is full employment in that area, a person needs 13 weeks in order to qualify under the variable entrance requirements in December. I am not talking about repeater provisions and extended benefits periods. This is only to qualify for unemployment insurance in the month of December.

Last year in the southern end of the province, Yarmouth in particular, manpower offices had to bring in additional help in order to implement the new variable entrance requirements along with the repeater provisions because where they had been able to settle on a set variable entrance requirement the year before, they now have repeater provisions depending upon the change in each month that could change depending on how many weeks they had received unemployment in the last qualifying period. So you had the unique position that in the month of October the unemployment insurance rate changed, the variable entrance requirement changed, and it went up to 17 weeks.

● (2150)

In the month of November a person had to have 18 weeks, and in the month of December it went up to 19 weeks. But what happened? You have the person who goes into the manpower office comes the middle of November, and he is told: "We will look at your claim." At the time he goes into the office, he needs maybe 17 weeks to qualify for benefits. However, he comes back in three weeks time and it is the turn of the month and he now needs 18 weeks. So then he goes through the whole process of putting in a claim again, only to find that if there has been a slow-up in the manpower office he is going to need 19 weeks. It is all good and well where you have a set unemployment rate in an area over a given year, but when the unemployment rate changes and the variable entrance requirement changes you get the harshness of this application. I think the commission should be looking at this harshness, and this brings me to my third criticism of the variable entrance requirement.

Before getting into the third criticism, I would like to reiterate that in order even to process the claim at the manpower office, it took four times the time to process a claim over the year before, and they had to bring in additional manpower from the Sydney area and the Antigonish area where they did not have that problem.

But let us look at the individual. Sometimes, with legislation, the individual is forgotten. When I say "he" I mean "he" or "she" because in this case it was mainly the women who were being hurt the most. But there is harshness to the individual. At this time of the year, he or she should know how many weeks he or she has got to work in order to qualify. People should not, in the month of December, have to go out looking for an additional week when there is no fish, when there are no jobs and there is no tourist season at that time of year. So, what we are doing to them, they come in and officials say, "Go out and find another week." Where do they find it?

Another thing is that the employer, in order to keep that labour force in the area, should know how many weeks he will have to create employment. I refer to the idea that Canada is a seasonal type of place and there is seasonality in the creation of jobs. This implementation has hurt the idea that the individual does not know today how many weeks he is going to need in order to qualify come the month of November or December. There is another aspect of it. Neither does the