

*Supply—Labour*

quite openly of lack of co-operation in the labour situation there. If the minister is not aware of what took place on the program perhaps he would investigate the matter and it can be brought up later. If these charges are true I think they cast a very serious reflection on the national employment office, because of their lack of co-operation. I am not speaking about the employment situation there but simply the refusal of the officers to co-operate.

**Mr. MacEachen:** I thank my hon. friend for bringing the matter to my attention. I had not been aware that a complaint had been made and I will certainly investigate it because it is my desire that the national employment service should co-operate constructively in the situation.

**Mr. Bell:** I am sure that some of the minister's very loyal colleagues and friends from Newfoundland will be able to bring it to his attention. As there is a minute or two left I should like to make one comment. When the government sets up a timetable, as they must do, to get certain matters through, including this item, before the Easter recess they had better be careful that the Minister of Finance does not come along and upset the applecart, because he is the real culprit in this whole business. He is the reason we are sitting here.

**Mr. Langlois:** I should like to ask one short question relating to applicants for unemployment insurance. Is it a fact that the officers in some of the local unemployment insurance offices are not there to help applicants receive unemployment insurance? I have been told that by an employer and also by an unemployment insurance officer, that they are clearly and specifically not there to help men receive unemployment insurance. What is the man going to do who does not know how to read or write? Does the minister know anything about this situation and, if not, will he inquire from the commission?

**Mr. MacEachen:** I will be glad to inquire on this point.

**The Chairman:** Shall the resolution carry?

**Mr. Peters:** Mr. Chairman, I want to raise a couple of matters and one of them does not involve any action that would displease the house. If the situation is as it was originally portrayed, then I do think that the government on behalf of the commission should be prepared to move an appropriation for this particular item.

With regard to the matter raised by the hon. member for Timmins, I am sure that members of the minister's own party will

[Mr. Bell.]

agree it is a fact that letters and directives have been sent out from the commission indicating that vigilance should be exercised with regard to people abusing the fund, and that in many cases this has been interpreted by local officials to mean a closer scrutiny for the purpose of getting rid of people already drawing benefits. The minister has said that these matters can be taken up through various channels. I have been a member of several boards of referees and I can assure the minister there is not a chance in hell of winning a case. I sat on one where the officials of the department were talking about married women who were pregnant. The girl in question certainly was not pregnant, and this was not a factor at all. Yet all the references that were being used had to do with married women who were going to have babies and therefore were unable to work. This was not the case at all, but these were the references that were being used. There is no chance of winning one of these cases.

I do not think there is any point in taking them to a board of referees because the operation has been very unsatisfactory, nor do I think there is much point in taking them to an umpire. On the board of referees there is a representative who is impartial, a representative of labour and a representative of management and so far as the board in North Bay is concerned I defy anybody to be able to say from sitting there and listening for an hour or so who represents what or whom. There is complete neutrality in representation.

Another problem has arisen which relates to some extent to the point raised by the hon. member for Saint John-Albert with regard to the television show the other day. The situation is that people who are no longer drawing benefits receive no assistance from the placement service of the unemployment insurance offices. This charge is being made in my area. I have investigated some of the cases and I think some of them have merit and some do not. But the fact is that young people who are not eligible for benefits receive very little assistance from the placement service, and I believe this situation is general across the country.

I would urge the minister to call together the industrial relations committee and submit the Unemployment Insurance Act to it for revision. There are abuses, and the fact that we have to borrow money for the fund and have done so on other occasions is an indication that the fund is not in a healthy state. This is not good enough for people who have paid their contributions, and when they now face the necessity of drawing benefits find that they have to wait on the whim of parliament to pass a supplementary estimate that will provide a loan to replenish the fund.