

Supply—Labour

much English, received a form in the mail containing a whole series of very simple questions such as "how much would you like to earn". The man, being optimistic, said he would like to earn \$75 a week. "What would you like to do?" He said he would like to drive a truck. After all, he has a crippled leg and cannot do every job. "Where would you like to work?" His wife and family live in Val Gagne so he said he would like to work there. However, what the man did not know was that he put his foot in six or seven carefully laid traps that resulted in his being disqualified indefinitely. He did not understand why he was disqualified indefinitely.

I went home on the week end and he came to see me. I looked at the correspondence and I showed him that he had disqualified himself because he had restricted his area too much and there were not that many truck driving jobs in Val Gagne. He said he knew that, but he would drive a truck in Timmins or Kirkland Lake where there are lots of truck driving jobs. But he had not said that. They asked him where and he said in Val Gagne.

As soon as I explained what he had done he went back to the office and reapplied. Lo and behold a letter came back saying that he was disqualified again because he only wanted to drive a truck. Their interpretation was that he was confining himself to driving a truck. This was not the man's intention at all. They asked him what he would like to do and he answered by saying that he would like to drive a truck. So he was disqualified again.

When I explained the situation to him he went back and reapplied but he was still disqualified. He was disqualified once for the area, once for the wages and once for the occupation. Finally they ran out of reasons for disqualifying him and they came back with a real dandy. They finally disqualified him on the ground of credibility. To date the man is still disqualified.

As I stated earlier, my objection is that the minister and his department seem to have swallowed this line holus-bolus because I have here the letter I received from the minister which reads in part as follows:

I understand that Mr. Julien subsequently completed a statement to the effect that he was restricting his availability to employment as a truck driver in Val Gagne only.

That, Mr. Chairman, is not a statement of fact. It is an opinion derived from a questionnaire sent out by the department which the man filled out very innocently, but the department drew their own conclusions from it and disqualified the man.

[Mr. Martin (Timmins).]

Mr. MacInnis: May I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Martin (Timmins): Yes.

Mr. MacInnis: Was the letter referred to by the hon. member signed by the Minister of Labour?

Mr. Martin (Timmins): Yes. He goes on to explain the fact that the man made an appeal to a board of referees from the insurance officer's decision and that his case was heard on November 20, 1963. I quote:

The board, after considering all the facts—

What facts, Mr. Chairman?

—unanimously dismissed the claimant's appeal and upheld the decision of the insurance officer.

He goes on to explain how he applied on two different occasions, and the reason he applied on two different occasions is because for the first time this man had explained to him just exactly what he had done.

I thrashed this out with the local officers in Timmins, and had them admit to me that if a man told the truth he would automatically disqualify himself, but if he turned out to be a real good liar he would qualify for insurance benefits. I ask the minister, is this a practice which is allowed to grow up in his department and in unemployment insurance offices across the country, and what is the reason for it? Is it to dress these figures up so that they will look a little better, so that we can hear more propaganda like we heard tonight, when the minister said the fund dropped only \$14 million last year compared with \$57 million the previous year?

How many of these cases exist across the country? If we find that out maybe we will find that the only difference between the figures this year and last year has been the number of people who have been disqualified by this insidious method. The minister should take a look at the situation immediately. Whenever it arises the people involved have to fall back on their communities and go on local municipal welfare. It is time something was done about it.

Mr. Winkler: It is not my intention to detain the committee at length, but I certainly concur in the speech made by the hon. member for Timmins with regard to the case he has brought forward. I find that immediately one goes beyond the boundaries of the larger urban centres, with their complex situations with regard to labour unemployment, this is a very common practice. Exactly the same situation exists in my part of Ontario, and obviously this is a practice which is condoned by the minister's department to disqualify applicants in cases where a very few miles are involved.