

*Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971*

which the have-not provinces presently receive are apparently not large enough; the funds which those provinces receive under the regional economic expansion program are not sufficient, and additional methods are being used. I well remember the speech made by the hon. member for York East (Mr. Otto) in connection with the textile industry. He said the government's proposals in that connection meant nothing more than welfare for textile industry workers in the province of Quebec. Here again, in the bill before us, we find payment being directed toward regions of Canada which experience high unemployment rates.

If we really wish to rid the country of unemployment, and I am thinking now of regions where unemployment is what one might call permanently high, it is time we assessed the position nationally in an effort to determine where the best opportunities of employment are available for people who at the present time are more or less perpetually out of work in regions which have a consistently high rate of unemployment. Perhaps it would be better to induce them to go to other regions or to take up other lines of work which would draw them out across the country where greater opportunities will exist for them to reach fulfilment as individuals. Too much of the legislation which has been placed before this House—and the present bill is like the others in this respect—is of a kind which limits scope for opportunity or the desire for advancement. Before passing any bill, hon. members should ask themselves whether it would widen the opportunities available to the average Canadian, whether it would stimulate the desire to seek opportunity. This bill fails to meet these criteria, particularly on the second count, and I therefore hope that when it is referred to the committee it will be subjected to an exhaustive study, that it will be examined to the fullest extent. I should like to think that major changes could be made to it, changes which would result in a more useful bill for those who will have to resort to it, perhaps through no fault of their own, in the years ahead.

**Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton):** At the outset, Mr. Speaker, I should like to say that I do not quarrel with every feature of this bill. But there are a great many features in connection with the Unemployment Insurance Commission with which I should like to quarrel. Let me say, in all fairness to the minister, that in my opinion he is one of the more conscientious ministers in the cabinet. I see his executive assistant has just arrived in the gallery. In face of the massive unemployment we are encountering this winter, the hon. gentleman's executive assistant, on behalf of the minister, has been most co-operative. There are some aspects of this bill which irritate a great many people, not only in my own constituency but elsewhere. I receive a lot of correspondence from people in other constituencies, too.

● (5:40 p.m.)

Getting back to the cost of education, most local school boards will eventually have to raise another 2½ to 3 per cent on top of their present commitments to pay for teachers' contributions to the unemployment insurance

fund. Certainly, the minister has picked a very lucrative field in the school teachers. Any insurance company would say he was taking a very good risk because teachers do not expect to be unemployed, especially those in the profession today. Those who are trying to enter the field will probably be unsuccessful so will not be affected by these additional contributions.

In my riding of Victoria-Haliburton, it will cost school boards alone approximately \$200,000 or more a year. The teachers do not oppose this legislation because of the extra tax involved, which I grant you is probably benefiting the less fortunate people; they are opposing it because the teachers, as a group, are being singled out to pay this tax. It rubs them the wrong way and I can well understand it. The minister is invading the field of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) here.

I have also received letters from municipalities which take objection to this increased cost. All of us know today that the municipalities are limited in the amount of tax dollars they can raise. Now, they are being asked to surrender a percentage of money that they could probably apply to other uses. This money is going to fatten the treasury of the Unemployment Insurance Commission. Not long ago I heard one hon. member say that the government has been talking out of both sides of its mouth, on the one hand talking about subsidizing the municipalities, and on the other hand talking about taking money from the municipalities. The municipalities would like to know where they stand. In fact, this is one of the main objections to taxing the teachers.

So much for the teachers. Let me return to the subject of the Unemployment Insurance Commission. A few years ago, in the name of efficiency unemployment insurance offices were moved out of the smaller centres. The government wanted centralization so these small offices were closed and offices were opened in larger municipalities. Then, it was not long before these were closed and the UIC moved to an even larger area. Then, the UIC got involved in the computer field. We were told we had to have centralization so that we could use the computers. Let me say right now, Mr. Speaker, that as far as these computers are concerned I wish they would use them for ships' anchors or something like that. I know of nothing else that creates more problems for the rank and file Canadian who is applying for unemployment insurance.

What happens when you telephone the local office to try and get help for people who are in need? Many of these people do not have any money in reserve, certainly not the less fortunate of whom I spoke a few moments ago, to tide them over the six or eight weeks or even longer they have to wait for assistance. In the case of one of my constituents, after I had contacted the Unemployment Insurance Commission and tried to straighten out his claim I was able to collect \$875 in back money owing to him. How many Canadian on the payroll and receiving a cheque every week put money aside for when they are unemployed? This sort of delay illustrates the inefficiency today of the Unemployment Insurance Commission. Certainly, computers do not provide the answers.

[Mr. Horner.]