

causes a claimant to be incapable of work. I do not think anyone would gainsay that fact.

As a very young physician I practised for a short time as a country practitioner, and I think my instructions to stay in bed for a certain length of time were often ignored. I remember driving in my Model A and seeing a woman running from her back porch, and when I got in, she was in bed waiting for my call. This occurred sometimes. The same day that woman had her youngster, she was up preparing a meal for her husband and his hired men who were doing the harvest. There are real work barriers for women as well as for men. People like the woman to whom I referred are few and far between.

Usually after six months of pregnancy—in the third trimester—women are not welcome in places of work because there is a certain amount of danger, particularly in factories. There is a danger of too much activity and overwork which could lead to miscarriage. In addition, pregnant women deserve a certain amount of courtesy and help during that period of their lives.

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After the baby is born, the first seven or ten days are frequently a matter of real illness, and certainly the strength of the mother does not return to a full pristine state for at least four to six weeks. I think the periods for maternity benefits from unemployment insurance are fairly sensible and we should not deviate from them. However, the payment of benefits to these people recognizes, as I said, the principle that the condition causes them to be incapable of work. From the medical standpoint, a certain amount of time is required before the woman can be considered fully capable of resuming her role as an active member of the labour force. These benefits are not paid to her because she has a new child. They are paid to her because she has been physically incapacitated and has been unable to do her job.

In the case of the adoptive parents, they do not experience the physical state which rendered the patient incapable of working for a period of time. For this reason it is not possible, according to the act, to consider granting maternity benefits to them. There is no doubt that adoptive parents play a very great role in our society, a very essential role. However, the unemployment insurance program is sometimes misconstrued—this was taken up by the most recent speaker—as a potential general aid mechanism through which the federal government can provide support to whatever needs can be identified. The needs of adoptive parents are quite legitimate though not through this act. The unemployment insurance program is not the proper vehicle to support incomes of parents who wish to adopt children and, who, for some legitimate reasons, think they should drop out of the labour force for a period of time. This is debatable.

It has been argued that there exists an anomaly in the unemployment insurance legislation which affords benefits to the natural mothers but which discriminates against adoptive mothers. This is so much ballyhoo. Adoptive parents emphasize that the experience of parenthood is similar, whether the

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parents are natural or adoptive. Adoptive mothers, they say, have the same need and desire to be with their child. Of course, but this is not why the benefits are being paid. They are being paid only because the natural mother was incapacitated, and she had to take herself away from the labour market for a certain period of time. When there is a couple who adopt a child, the woman is viewed as being capable of performing a job at all times, unlike a pregnant woman who is, to varying degrees, incapacitated during the period surrounding childbirth.

The quality of treatment of natural and adoptive mothers is an area of some concern to some women's rights groups, and has been studied in a preliminary fashion by the federal Advisory Council on the Status of Women. It is most interesting that this Council expressed the opinion that the unemployment insurance program would not be the best means of providing the adoption or maternity support that may be required. You must remember that unemployment insurance is a program designed to provide income maintenance during an interruption of earnings under specific conditions. It is supported by employers, employees, and the federal government. We feel we have a responsibility in that direction. It is not intended to be a general answer to the income needs of Canadians regardless of the origin of those needs. There are other methods.

We cannot avoid the question of whether existing programs are meeting the needs of adoptive parents. However, if we cannot, what sort of support should be provided and who should provide it? In the case of those families who need some form of income support and who are judged to be good prospective parents, the means of providing this type of assistance are available. There are provincial programs available to provide this type of help. In general they are supported by the federal government through the programs of the Department of National Health and Welfare. Do not forget that the federal government contributes 50 per cent to practically all these programs.

One of the things we are always harping on is the need for the provinces to take up, if they have not done so already, the question of the Canada Assistance program. Family allowance payments are provided for adopted children as soon as they are placed in the family. That is federal money. To provide unemployment insurance benefits to parents, on a needs criteria basis, would overlap with provincial and other federal efforts, and would undermine the income-related and the individual nature of the program.

Unemployment insurance benefits are intended to provide income replacement based on the previous earnings and the labour force attachment of an individual rather than on the needs of the family.

Mr. Forrestall: We are not talking about the needs of the family. We are talking about the income of the family.

Mr. Railton: May I continue for a few minutes, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Forrestall: Continue.