

72 hours. This was not done, in spite of the minister's utterances and his good will. A little later, I handed to the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) a petition with 400 signatures, attesting to this. Those are the facts.

Mr. Speaker, the situation is tragic. I understand that the government took concrete remedial steps. Nevertheless, once the minister has given instructions to civil servants and the cheques have been issued, thus solving the individual's problem for two or three weeks, the same problem arises again. The individual, after a waiting period of a month and a half, received two or three cheques. But he now not only does not receive a cheque, he does not even receive forms to be filled in, although he has made enough contributions.

I stand ready tomorrow to submit to the parliamentary secretary a list of over 300 names of citizens of my constituency and the neighbouring constituencies of the Eastern Townships who are faced with this situation.

Mr. Speaker, I personally called several times on the Sherbrooke, Trois-Rivières and Montreal regional offices. I do not blame the officials, they are doing their best. Moreover, in the Sherbrooke office they hired 25 extra employees to face the demand, proof that there was a problem which has not been solved since the officials tell us they are too few to cope with the load and that they are forced to work in unsanitary conditions.

Mr. Speaker, this problem of unemployment is of national urgency and is far from being solved since the number of unemployed is increasing, the winter season is a particularly difficult one for those who are without work and without income.

• (2210)

Since I was not satisfied with the reply given the other day by the parliamentary secretary, I wanted to raise this matter again in the hope that the government will study the way in which cheques are issued at the Montreal office and will consider the advisability of decentralizing the system, since the whole Quebec population is obviously too much for computers to cope with.

I also hope that the government will study the operation of unemployment insurance district offices with a view to making them more efficient, and will help officers by giving them the necessary tools.

Mr. Speaker, let us review, once and for all, all those cases of delays, and let us stop saying, as the minister wrote in his letter—and instead of tackling the real problem of the issuing of cheques: If you do not receive your cheque, go to the welfare bureau and borrow money, and when you receive your cheque, you can pay the welfare bureau back.

Mr. Speaker, considering the interest you take in the fate of Canadian people, surely you will agree that the direct effect of this is to reduce to the most abject poverty those workers who become unemployed overnight and are then doomed to live on welfare.

Mr. Speaker, I do hope that the government has been sensitized to this problem. The prime minister came to Victoriaville recently, and people asked him that question. They gave him a rather cold welcome, as they should, precisely because this problem is so real.

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely ask the minister to remedy this situation, to stop hiding and to really come to grips with the problem. I think that the Canadian people will be really grateful to him for doing so, since this is at present the most serious problem faced by Canada.

[English]

**Mr. Ray Perrault (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Manpower and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has suggested that computer operations of the Unemployment Insurance Commission in Montreal have not been functioning properly and that this has caused delays in the processing of unemployment insurance claims. For the information of the hon. member I should like to say there have been no cases of delay in the Montreal office of the Unemployment Insurance Commission caused by computer breakdown.

Together with the hon. member and my minister, I want to see as speedy as possible processing of unemployment insurance claims. Nevertheless, I would point out to him that after his allegations of March 9, in which he stated there were 450 cases of unresolved unemployment insurance problems, it was determined upon investigation that he was apparently talking about all the cases he had looked into during the past six months, not only for Sherbrooke but also for Quebec and Trois-Rivières.

I have been advised by the Unemployment Insurance Commission that between January 24 and today the hon. member has submitted to the Sherbrooke office a grand total of 132 cases, not 450. Based on commission experience across Canada in January and February, no more than one-third would have been designated problem cases.

In any event, as of March 10, 1972, the Sherbrooke office was in the process of answering only 19 cases which had been submitted by the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin). Of this number, the commission has reported that at least half were cases which had already been submitted where people were not satisfied with a previous decision of the commission. In view of the foregoing facts it would seem that there have not been inordinate delays occasioned by alleged computer breakdown or by any other factor.

If in fact the hon. member has any specific cases of delays in the processing of unemployment insurance claims that he would like to bring to my attention, or if he can be more specific as to the nature and time of these so-called computer breakdowns, I will gladly have the charges investigated at the earliest possible opportunity. As the hon. member knows, my minister is determined to provide the speediest possible service for those with a legitimate entitlement to unemployment insurance benefits.

GRAIN—ALLOCATION OF BOXCARS TO INCREASE STOCKS AT VANCOUVER

**Mr. A. P. Gleave (Saskatoon-Biggar):** Mr. Speaker, on March 9 I asked the minister in charge of the Wheat Board whether, in view of the low level of wheat stocks at the west coast terminals, he could assure us that the volume of grain to be moved and the allocation of boxcars