

public hearings on this subject. I should perhaps emphasize at this point that one of the main considerations that motivated the Canadian-American reference of the Garrison Diversion Project to the IJC was based on the fact that the International Joint Commission is an independent and impartial agency which has always submitted positive recommendations to both governments. Having said this, the commission was given important terms of reference according to which it was asked to make all the recommendations that it judged necessary to ensure compliance with the provisions of section IV of the Boundary Waters Treaty. In the last analysis, the IJC therefore had to determine—

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. parliamentary secretary, but his allotted time has expired.

[Translation]

MANPOWER—REQUEST FOR PRECISE DATE OF APPLICATION OF PROVISION OF BILL C-69

Mr. Jacques Lavoie (Hochelaga): Mr. Speaker, I wish to point out this evening that on December 20, 1975, this Parliament passed legislation, namely Bill C-69 amending the Unemployment Insurance Act. The unemployment insurance allowances paid to 65 year-old individuals were immediately cut. Afterwards I asked a question to the minister concerning one of my constituents who during the period in which he had received allowances had suffered a heart attack. I imagine he had not chosen that time to have it. Of course I had telephone and personal contacts with the Unemployment Insurance Office, more especially with the one at 2020 University Street in Montreal, an office where I hope the minister could launch an investigation because it has given rise to many problems even if few of my constituents deal with that office.

I phoned that office to explain the facts. I was told: The legislation came into effect on July 4, 1976. Reference was made to section 25(b). I again brought up the matter in the House and was told the same thing. Having made some inquiries, a letter which I received from the minister confirmed that section 25(b) was indeed in effect since January and not July. But that was not enough. Section 29(5) was referred to and the whole issue was confused in such a way as to prevent the beneficiary of my constituency from receiving his allowances. I asked the minister's office to provide complete data concerning that beneficiary. When did he become unemployed? How many allowances did he receive? When I phoned the departmental office during the summer, that is on September 21, 1976, I was told: He was entitled to 25 weeks' benefits. He was paid until March 1976 and he took sick after the initial period. I am told he should be paid. I would not want to create any confusion, because it was the secretary to the minister's assistant who answered my questions but she said that he should have been paid until June 1976. What I find strange about all this is that in one paragraph of a letter dated December 7, 1976, which I have here in my hand, I am told that the person was declared ineligible for unemployment

Adjournment Debate

benefits from March 19, 1976 because, according to the act, he could not work. That reflects section 25(b) of the Unemployment Insurance Act.

Mr. Speaker, far be it from me to blame the minister or the parliamentary secretary, but I want to say that to us, members of parliament, whether we voted for or against a bill, the thing that matters is that the majority wins in our system. That act was passed on December 20, 1975, and then we are told: Very well, but such and such a paragraph comes into effect on such and such a date. Let no one come and tell me that an act passed by parliament on December 20, 1975 contains sections to be applied only as of July 1976. As for the members of parliament, I want to say once and for all that we should be able to give new purpose to our role. What do we do in this House?

Throughout that administration we are told: For the old people, the cut is immediate; there is no administrative problem. But on the other hand, in other sectors, cuts are put off because it is more advantageous. Personally, I find that illogical, Mr. Speaker. That is why I have asked for this discussion tonight with the minister who is probably busy, I realize that. So, his parliamentary secretary is in the House, and I am grateful for that.

However, among the other letters dated January 20, 1977, there is one dated December 23, 1976. They even contain inconsistencies. I feel that it is sheer madness in the case of this stevedore who, at a certain time during his unemployment insurance eligibility period, became ill, and all of a sudden, they refer sometimes to one section of the act, at other times to another. The situation is about the same in about every other darn area. One day, parliament will have to make up its mind. If it does not, something may happen which will certainly not be interesting.

That is the fundamental issue not only for my constituent, but for the reassessment of the function of elected representatives in the House of Commons. If we adopt a legislative measure, let it be put into force from the moment we have adopted it. Otherwise, let us change the system. I do not know what to do. One day, we shall have to make up our minds. I conclude; I know other hon. members wish to speak after me. There is the parliamentary secretary who will reply to me, and I am anxious to hear what he has to say, especially in connection with Mr. Charles Dubé's problem.

Mr. Arthur Portelance (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member for Hochelaga just described is a special case. It is true that he received certain letters from the minister. But as regards the amendment contained in section 7, its purpose is to prevent beneficiaries who are no longer on the labour market from receiving sickness benefits. Therefore, Bill C-69 proposed to amend the act in order that sickness benefits be paid to those beneficiaries who could work if they were not sick, injured or quarantined.

That amendment was reflected in paragraph 25(b) of the Unemployment Insurance Act and came into force on January