

Unemployment Assistance

by Canada in respect to unemployment assistance costs in the provinces.

Mrs. Ellen L. Fairclough (Hamilton West): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of National Health and Welfare intend to make any further remarks?

Mr. Martin: I had not intended at this time, Mr. Speaker, to say anything in addition to what I said in a preliminary way yesterday and by way of reply to certain questions. However, I shall be very glad to deal with any questions that may be put from time to time.

Mrs. Fairclough: Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us has just been in our hands about an hour or so. As a matter of fact, I think I just received it about 12.30 p.m. today. We have not had too much opportunity to go over it and, of course, the actual bill itself is closely related to and almost dependent upon the agreements. It is merely an implementation of the agreements themselves which are of a rather technical nature. So apart from asking questions on the clauses as they come before us there is really not very much we can do at this time.

I should like to reiterate one statement I made last night, that when the major central provinces are not in this scheme, necessarily a large part of Canada is excluded. Therefore for the minister to say that there is now no excuse for anyone making remarks with reference to the participation of the federal government in unemployment assistance is scarcely true. I asked the minister yesterday for copies of the correspondence with the provinces, particularly of letters from officials of the non-participating provinces. If my memory serves me well the minister said that those had been tabled. I cannot find them; they are not anywhere. The only correspondence that I could find was—

Mr. Martin: Let me explain; I did not understand my hon. friend yesterday. There were no letters from officials tabled, but there were letters from the heads of governments and responsible ministers which were tabled. That is what I thought my hon. friend was referring to.

Mrs. Fairclough: I would be grateful if the minister would tell me when they were tabled. I searched all morning and so far I have been unable to procure them. In the absence of explanations from the premiers or their ministers of the non-participating provinces it is difficult to know just what are the reasons for their failure to participate. I would think that in a debate such as this the reasons put forward by the responsible

ministers in those provinces would be vital. As a matter of fact there are a few thoughts which come immediately to my mind without knowing what the provinces may have said on the matter, and the first one is—

Mr. Martin: Would the hon. member permit me to see if I can help her in her presentation at the moment. When we get into committee I could deal with these specific questions. For instance, it is most difficult for me to do this now. The hon. member has asked me about these provinces and I shall be glad to answer when we get into committee. I think I can facilitate the matter.

Mrs. Fairclough: If the minister has the information at hand and can tell us precisely what objections were raised by the non-participating provinces, that would be extremely interesting.

Mr. Martin: I shall be glad to do that.

Mrs. Fairclough: Having had some experience in municipal affairs I know it is unrealistic to expect the provincial or municipal administrations to be responsible for the administration of this assistance. The government of Canada has set up right across Canada its own machinery to handle unemployment insurance benefits and it would seem to me that if the government of Canada intends to do something to assist those persons who are not otherwise covered, either by reason of failure to qualify for unemployment insurance benefits because of being in uninsurable employment or by reason of having made insufficient contributions, if the government intends to go along with some sort of assistance it seems to me it could have gone much further than is indicated here in administering these applications.

It is my opinion that the social security plan set out in what came to be known as the green book, the proposals of 1945, have been practically scuttled by this government in the preparation of the plan which has now more or less been forced down the throats of the participating provinces. The percentage which I mentioned yesterday and other pertinent factors again are set out in the agreements; they are not a part of the bill itself. Because they are part of the agreements, actually the attitude of the respective provinces to the agreements they have made, whether they have signed them willingly or reluctantly, enters very substantially into this particular bill and its enactment.

All of these things, it seems to me, are up in the air. They are matters on which we do not have too much information. I hope that the minister will be in a position to give us