

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

her husband becomes employed elsewhere. Such spouses are cut off from benefits and may find it difficult to find another job in a small rural community. The commission expects them, in many cases, to drive 50 or 60 miles each way a day to another job.

If the minister were to curb these discriminatory aspects of the plan which work against the interests of people in rural areas, we might end much of the public backlash against this plan and not hear so many speeches on the subject by some of the more conservative members of this House. I hope the minister will comment on some of the problems rural people face. I have been aware of these difficulties in my riding for many years. I think every other rural member encounters similar difficulties. The last time I went out to my riding—

**Mr. Epp:** What year was that?

**Mr. Nystrom:** I went out a couple of weeks ago. I am not like the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) who, I am told, goes to his riding about every year.

**Mr. Epp:** Every week.

**Mr. Nystrom:** I recall that when I was last in my riding I learned of a case involving a person who had paid into the unemployment insurance plan for many years. He was a hardworking person who had worked at an unskilled job for a low salary. He lost his job through no fault of his own. Because he could not afford to drive 100 miles a day he was cut off. It was alleged he was not looking for a job seriously, that he was not really serious about driving 100 miles a day for the sake of a job. He could not afford to drive those distances. He earned little more than the minimum wage and had kids to feed and a family to look after. He could not afford to drive 100 miles a day, and was disqualified. But if he had said to the Unemployment Insurance Commission, "I am willing to go anywhere and accept any salary," he probably would have received UIC benefits. That illustrates an anomaly which ought not to exist in the Unemployment Insurance Act. I hope the minister will consider, if he replies later this afternoon, some of our representations on this subject.

**Mr. Fred McCain (Carleton-Charlotte):** Mr. Speaker, there are times when I wonder why some of those on my extreme left do not buy a one-way ticket to another jurisdiction. The system under which we live seems to suit them so badly that their only hope lies in that solution. One of those hon. members made some rare remarks with which I agree. The hon. member who spoke previously mentioned the position of rural claimants for unemployment insurance who are in a most difficult situation.

**Mr. Nystrom:** First you chastise me, then you agree with me.

**Mr. McCain:** Our present system may need a multitude of change, but it has evolved over a long period and has created a pretty good society which you, to judge by your speeches would destroy.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[Mr. Nystrom.]

**Mr. McCain:** The occasional appearance of sanity in the remarks you make relating to our system suggest paranoia or schizophrenia—certainly no solid groundwork for the political career you espouse.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Is the hon. member referring to you, Mr. Speaker?

**Mr. McCain:** People in rural communities must pool their transportation requirements. Many who work must arrange for babysitters. In some cases when they are asked to go to work they are not given enough time to arrange for a babysitter or transportation. As I say, many use transport pools. I drew the minister's attention by letter, today, to a lady whose job came to a halt but who wanted to work more. She happened to be pregnant at the time of her dismissal but needed to continue working primarily because she was pregnant. An investigator from an office arrived and discovered that she was receiving unemployment insurance while pregnant. She had, therefore, not been eligible for benefits from the beginning, and should return the entire amount received and would not be eligible for pregnancy benefits thereafter.

This is the imposition of a hardship which I am sure the minister does not support. It was brought about by virtue of the fact that on the date of her application she lived 100 miles from the decision-making office. I submit the individual who investigated could have used some judgment in respect of her need and position. Instead, he respected only the ruling which was made in head office.

• (1720)

When somebody appeals a case from 100 miles away it is extremely difficult. The unemployed person does not have the means to get to the point where he or she can appeal. My particular appeal to the minister at this moment, as we are discussing unemployment insurance, is that there be some realism injected into the administration of the act and the decision-making process of who is eligible and who is not. They should quit nitpicking and look at the realities of those located in the rural communities. These people do not have public transportation at their disposal such as is available within quite a number of miles of this House or many miles of Toronto, public transportation provided by public funds from this government and governments of other jurisdictions.

These people in rural communities must have time. They cannot be expected to go to work the moment they receive a call. They should not be asked to go to work until they have had a reasonable period of time to obtain pooled transportation and a babysitter. I beseech the minister to ask his rural, decision-making people to use judgment and to extend mercy or, if necessary, alter some of the regulations under which aid is granted under this act.

**Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt):** Mr. Speaker, it is always interesting to note how hon. members to my right, notably the previous speaker, castigate this party for putting forward a motion. They say they cannot support it and then turn around and raise the same kind of problem that is covered in clause 16 of the minister's amendment. They recognize the problem.

**Some hon. Members:** Oh, oh!