

Employment and Immigration
GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

**EMPLOYMENT AND IMMIGRATION
 REORGANIZATION ACT**

MEASURE TO ESTABLISH DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT AND
 IMMIGRATION ETC.

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-27, to establish the Department of Employment and Immigration, the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission and the Canada Employment and Immigration Advisory Council, to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971, and to amend certain other statutes in consequence thereof, as reported (with amendments) from the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

Mr. Lorne Nystrom (Yorkton-Melville): Mr. Speaker, I intended to make a very short comment, but if the hon. member for Northumberland-Miramichi (Mr. Dionne) wants me to speak for 20 minutes, I will try.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Don't provoke him.

Mr. Nystrom: It is only when I get provoked. Before the lunch hour, I was speaking briefly on the last motion before the House. I was complaining about what I thought was a real discrimination against people coming from rural areas such as in my constituency where some people have been forced to lie to the Unemployment Insurance Commission in order to receive benefits. I was saying that I have had a lot of experience with that.

When I went to my office over the lunch hour, there was a telephone message waiting for me. The MLA in the Pelly constituency in my riding, Norman Lusney, who was elected on June 8 in a by-election victory by the NDP where he received nearly 50 per cent of the votes, had a particular case for me involving a man named Edward Wasylkowski. This gentleman had seen me during the by-election campaign about an unemployment insurance problem he was having. He had worked in a refinery in the town of Kamsack for 20 or more years. I use this as a specific example of what I was talking about. The refinery closed and obviously he lost his job. This is a very honest man, 58 years old. He has a house in the town of Kamsack. His family and friends live in and around Kamsack. He was honest with the Unemployment Insurance Commission. He told them at his age, with his family conditions and so on that it would be very difficult for him to move out of the Kamsack area to get a job. He could not really pull up his roots and move to Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg or elsewhere.

This gentleman is willing to work at absolutely anything in the Kamsack area. He has been looking very hard for a job. He told me of some of the places he was at seeking employment. This man was cut off unemployment insurance benefits. The Unemployment Insurance Commission said he was restricting his search for employment by not being willing to go outside the town in which he lives. I advised him to appeal the case. The appeal was heard a few days ago in Regina. He

[Mr. Speaker.]

lost the appeal because he was limited in search of a job. The call I received from Norm Lusney on his behalf at two o'clock this afternoon is a specific example of what happens in a rural constituency. If Mr. Wasylkowski lived in Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg or elsewhere, there would be no problem.

Kamsack has a population of 3,500 people. It is a huge farm service centre. There are many villages around it. It serves between 10,000 and 15,000 people in that part of the province. It will be seen that I am not talking about a little village with a couple of hundred people. This is a fairly major town in Saskatchewan. This man is being penalized because he lives in Kamsack instead of Regina or Toronto. He is not able to draw unemployment insurance benefits which he would be able to draw if he lived in one of those cities. He is being penalized for being honest. He is a very honest and decent man. If he had said to the Unemployment Insurance Commission a few weeks ago that he was willing to work anywhere, he would have received his unemployment insurance benefits. The chances are he would not have found a job anywhere. He could have stayed in Kamsack, anyway, and drawn benefits. Just because he would have been able to mislead someone, he would have received benefits.

• (1600)

That is a terrible position to put people in, to force them to be dishonest, to try to tear people's consciences apart. I could go back through my files and find example after example of this type of case. As I said, this one just happened to come to my attention at two o'clock this afternoon. Later on I shall send the minister details of this case and appeal to him personally to try to get Mr. Wasylkowski back on unemployment insurance benefits, because he is still trying to locate work. The MLA, who is doing his job very well; he is trying to find this man temporary employment in a park nearby. Sometimes the Liberal party wonders why Canadians in certain areas are very cynical about them. I think in particular of areas such as the north, western Canada, rural Canada. I would say this is one of the areas. In the recent by-election in the town of Kamsack the NDP received some 55 per cent of the votes. The Liberal party fell from second place to a bad third place, and I doubt it will do any better than that in the foreseeable future.

The motion before us today also perturbs me as I look at it from the rural point of view. There are to be various scales for determining the benefit period for people who are unemployed. The country is to be divided into 54 different regions with regard to the Unemployment Insurance Act, and the length of time a person will benefit from unemployment insurance will depend upon the unemployment rate within each of these areas. I come from an area which has a very low unemployment rate—roughly 4 per cent. Part of the reason for this figure is that treaty Indians living on reserves are not counted when calculating the figure. In the past, for a major attachment, persons could claim unemployment insurance benefits, if my understanding is correct, for some 51 weeks if they had worked for at least 20 weeks. This is to be changed under the terms of the legislation before us. It is to be brought down to