

Unemployment Insurance Act

clerk would not recommend him for it and would not give him the name of the employer. This man went through the yellow pages of the telephone book and placed call after call until he eventually found where the job was. He got it on his own.

Then there was another man who was a stationary engineer by trade but he was getting on in years. He had been only a short time with an employer when he became ill and was obliged to spend some time in hospital. When he recovered he wanted to get to work. He was desperate because he is the type of person who just has to work. In the UIC office he saw a listing for a dishwasher. He said he would take anything—would even wash dishes. The clerk asked, “Do you have any experience?” He said, “I have been married for 40 years.” The clerk said, “That does not give you any experience, and I cannot give you that job.”

I hear the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin) saying that men do not wash dishes, Mr. Speaker.

An hon. Member: Sexist.

Mr. Kempling: This man also went through the yellow pages and called all the restaurants until he found the one that wanted a dishwasher. He got the job.

Another difficulty concerns the computer, Mr. Speaker. Whatever goes wrong in UIC is the fault of the computer. If everyone gets an overpayment, it is the fault of the computer. If anybody gets a nasty letter, it is the fault of the computer.

● (2130)

Here is a case of a lady who left her employer because she had a disagreement with him. It is her right. She left and applied for unemployment insurance. The unemployment insurance office replied by telling her that she should not have left her job and that it would cost her a certain penalty of so many weeks before she could become eligible for unemployment insurance. She told them that she understood that. In the meantime she went out to look for a job. She was a reasonably aggressive girl and in the matter of a few days she found a job. After this she began to get wads of paper from unemployment insurance. She called the person who signed the paper but she could not get whoever it was on the phone. However, she told them that she did not want them to send her any more of these papers because she had a job and did not need unemployment insurance. She told them that they had not sent her any money and she did not need any money. She also told them not to send her any more paper. This whole series of events is amazing.

First, she received a piece of paper telling her that she should not have left her job and because she left she would not get certain benefits. Then she received another piece of paper which told her that her occupation was a general office clerk and that it was determined she must make a minimum of 15 contacts per week to be considered eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. Next she was sent a letter that told her that she would have to pay back the money she did not get. Each time the lady received one of these papers, she called the office and told them that she had not received any money. She told

them that they had not sent her any money and how could she send money back that she had not received. Next she was sent a letter saying that because she failed to appear on July 24 at 10.45 a.m. her benefits would be suspended. Again she told them that she had not received any and asked them how they could be suspended. On and on it went until finally the phone calls and the cards got to the point where they caught up with each other and the harassment ceased. Of course all of this was all blamed on the computer.

I think probably the most famous case that we had concerned a man who had three unemployment insurance files. Imagine the frustration. He would call the unemployment insurance office and tell them that he had not received any benefits. They told him to wait while someone got his file. Someone then grabbed his file and he was told that it showed he was not entitled to benefits. The man would then tell the unemployment insurance office that he had been unemployed for such and such a time, that he had paid into the fund for a certain length of time, that he was an architect and he was looking for work, etc. The unemployment office would tell him that they would check into it and advise him later.

The architect would call back and this time file number two would be drawn. File number two showed that he owed them money. First, the man had not received any money, yet he owed the unemployment insurance money.

Believe it or not, there was file number three which said that he was entitled to benefits but that there was a mix-up in the computer and it was hoped that it would all be clear by the fifteenth of the following month. Finally I went in and raised a little Cain, and an investigation was called. As a result, three files for this fellow appeared on the manager's desk.

These are things which happen within the bureaucracy. The point I am getting at, and the message I want to convey to the minister is this: the attitudes of some of the employees should be looked into, and in this connection I think one has to start at the top. By starting at the top one can see where this direction comes from. It is either direction or lack of direction. Either the people are being directed to harass and there is a hit team, or the system is being run so loosely that these people can do as they please.

A lot of the criticisms of the Unemployment Insurance Commission is the result of a few hundred people in some urban areas across Canada. They are the ones who have created the greatest amount of criticism for the Unemployment Insurance Commission in Canada. We all hear about those who abuse the system.

I would be naive if I said there was no abuse of the system. I also believe that these abuses are small in number compared to the total number of claimants. When people come to me about abuses of the system, I always ask them to give me an example or a name. They all know of several who abuse the system, but they can never come up with a name. The answer is usually that they have heard it from somebody else who heard it from somebody else. We all know there is abuse. But I think the numbers generally across the country, especially when one takes the whole thing into consideration, are relatively small.