

Bennett in British Columbia to support the new type of Social Credit.

Mr. Epp: Tell us about Barrett.

Mr. Nystrom: He had 40 per cent of the vote in British Columbia, and you had 4 per cent. Mr. Speaker, if you could get those Social Crediters to quieten down, I would like to come to my point. This motion deals with something that the hon. member for Hamilton West has made me rather angry about. It is about people who might refuse employment without just cause. I have some grievance with the UIC office, and I am glad the minister is here because I have written him many times about the way UIC discriminates against rural people in. The hon. member for Skeena (Mrs. Campagnolo) and members from many other rural areas know what I mean. I know of many cases where someone has been turned down because the UIC did not think they were searching for a job or because they were rural people, and I can give examples.

There is the case of a lady in Balcarres, 50 miles from Regina. She used to live in Regina but went to Balcarres because of her husband's employment. She was unemployed, and applied for UIC while looking for a job. She said, "I am willing to look for a job in Balcarres. I am willing to work at almost anything." But they turned her down. They said that she was limiting herself in terms of where she would go for a job. She could not afford to go to Regina, which would have meant driving 50 miles each way, or 100 miles a day on the round trip. The couple had one car, kids and babysitting expenses. She was willing to look for work in Balcarres or in the immediate, surrounding area. There are towns and villages in that area. But she was disqualified because she was living in a rural area.

● (1710)

I do not think that is fair. A person who lives in Hamilton—for example, the hon. member for Hamilton West—can get on the bus or walk the streets looking for a job. In the big city, one can go by subway. You cannot do that in a rural community. It is not economically worth your while to take a job if it means driving the 100-mile round trip to Regina each day merely to earn the minimum wage or slightly more. The person in that position is discriminated against vis-à-vis the person who lives in the urban centre.

Let me mention another case in my riding. It involves a guy who lives in the little community of Langenburg, 55 miles from Yorkton. He is a labourer who works in a garage and makes little more than the minimum wage. He was laid off and willing to work at any job within a reasonable distance of his town. But the commission said, "Look, you are not willing to drive to Yorkton, which is 55 miles away, each day; therefore, you are cut off." I do not think that was fair. One can see how our present system discriminates against people in rural areas. Case after case of this type has come to my attention. I have written to the minister. I think the UIC act should make some allowance for these people. It should take into account the economic factors involved and define more clearly what is and what is not a just search for a job. It should specify circumstances in which an applicant is not limiting his ability to search for a job because of the special circumstances

Unemployment Insurance Act

involved. As it is, the act discriminates against rural people.

In my riding—and I have heard many other rural members talk about this—if a person is honest when he applies to the UIC and says he cannot afford to travel 100 miles a day to and from work merely to earn \$3 or \$5 an hour, he is cut off in many cases from benefits from the Unemployment Insurance Commission. It says to these applicants in rural areas, "You are limiting yourself, and not really searching for a job." But if that person lies to the Unemployment Insurance Commission and says, "Yes, I am willing to look for work anywhere and work at anything, at any wage," he will obtain UIC benefits. I do not advise my constituents to lie to the Unemployment Insurance Commission, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that if some of them do lie they will get benefits, and if they are honest, they will not. This sort of thing spoils a good plan. It whips up the sort of backlash that we see on the part of the more right wing Neanderthals in the House. It makes them think that the poor people are ripping off the system.

The present unemployment insurance plan discriminates against the people. Its effect is that if people lie to the Unemployment Insurance Commission, say they are willing to go anywhere for a job, to the moon, if necessary, and work for any pay, they will obtain benefits; but if they tell the truth, the commission will cut them off. It says to such people they are limiting their search for a job. I have seen this happen time and again. If any hon. member does not believe me, I invite him to my office where I can show him countless letters documenting the sort of cases I have just mentioned. Every time I go to my riding for office hours I run into people who have been cut off UIC benefits because they limited their search for a job. Possibly the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Hnatyshyn) has encountered similar situations in his riding, which is smaller than mine and much more urban.

People of any rural community encounter these difficulties. Why must we operate under a system which encourages people to be dishonest? Why can we not design a plan which will make allowances for those living in rural areas? The lack of such provision irks me. I do not want to advise my constituents to lie or cheat in order to get around the guidelines. That, often, is precisely what they must do if they want to draw unemployment insurance. This could be corrected by changing the act to take account of those special factors affecting people in rural communities. As I have said, I referred many of these cases to the minister's office. The majority—some came from my riding—concern people who had been disqualified because of improper job search or unwillingness to travel great distances to look for a job. These factors make the plan unacceptable to many members of the general public, and this must be changed.

The hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) mentioned the case of the spouse, either male or female, who quit employment because the other partner moved to another town or city to find employment. Cases like this have arisen in my rural riding. It is not uncommon for people to move from one town in my riding to another, say from Yorkton to a small town like Kamsack or another town 30, 40 or 50 miles away. If the spouse is a housewife, say, she must quit her job and follow her husband when