

representative (Mr. Hellyer) voted against adoption of the Bill.

We, of the Liberal Party, during the last Parliament, felt it would have been more equitable for some families to receive amounts of \$15 and \$20 monthly instead of the present \$5 and \$8.

The bill was introduced in the House and I believe a majority of hon. members were prepared to pass it. But since this did not take place, today, the new Minister of National Health and Welfare has already given us to understand that the Family Allowances Plan will definitely be reviewed and that it will all be done in co-operation with the provinces who are interested in improving such a plan. I hope that it will be possible to do all this quickly enough.

One of the responsibilities of members of this House is to make sure that family allowances are paid everywhere in Canada and that the amounts are not too different from one province to the other. I do not think it would be fair for a province to be able to pay \$35 allowances while other provinces could only afford to pay \$20 a month. It is advisable that these things be considered in future discussions between the Minister of National Health and Welfare and his colleagues from the various provinces.

The minister also dealt with the improvements that will be made to the old age security pension plan. Of course, in the last election campaign, many members certainly heard about the problems that exist in that field, particularly in the case of a married man who has reached the age of 65, who is deprived of his earnings and who has a younger wife.

In Quebec, a 65-year-old man is entitled to a pension of \$150 a month. If his wife is younger, they both will have to live on that amount. In my opinion, there surely is room for improvement in such cases and I hope this Parliament will give this matter priority.

Much has been said about unemployment insurance during the election campaign. Several candidates of some parties accused the government of bad administration with regard to unemployment insurance. I think all those former members who voted for this legislation should be proud of themselves. I am convinced that Canada still has one of the best unemployment insurance programs in the world. On account of it, several fathers, mothers and children were able to have a better Christmas and New Year's because they were in receipt of unemployment insurance. It is true that there are several unemployed people in Canada. However, it must be remembered, before introducing such a program, that two thirds of the Canadian workers are not unionized. The last third which is unionized certainly has better working conditions than the two thirds which are not.

For the first time in this country, a worker was entitled to benefits in case of illness, which was not the case before, except for people with good jobs, such as federal, provincial or municipal public servants, and people working for big companies that could afford such benefits. But under the new unemployment insurance system, workers are entitled to such benefits in case of illness.

For the first time also, women, in case of maternity, will be able to receive their salary for a maximum period of 15

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weeks, and they will also be eligible to unemployment insurance assistance after eight weeks of employment.

The drawing of maximum benefits after 20 weeks of employment has also been allowed. All this was beneficial to the economy.

During the holiday season, the department stores had one of the best years ever. And I am sure that the sales were not made only to people who are employed. A good number of unemployed people had happier holidays because of their unemployment benefits provided by insurance, this humane program introduced by the last Parliament.

Ninety-four per cent of the population of Canada is working while 6 per cent is unemployed. However, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the 94 per cent who are working have a responsibility towards the 6 per cent who are out of work.

I would like those who have a job to keep it as long as possible because I have faith in the Canadian worker. I am sure that among the unemployed 6 per cent many would also be working if it were as easy to find a job as it is claimed.

We constantly hear that there are problems in Canada. There are problems but we know that Canada has the second highest standard of living in the world. The only other position in which we could be is the first one. It is not all that bad. I hope that with the help of all our recently elected friends, we will succeed in reaching this first position. I am sure that this is the main goal of all my colleagues on this side of the House.

• (2010)

[English]

Mr. Norval Horner (Battleford-Kindersley): Mr. Speaker, first I should like to congratulate you on the appointment to your high office. I offer my congratulations, also, to the Deputy Speaker. I know this parliament will be the better for Your Honour's presence in the chair, and as a result Canada will be a better place. I am not sure we can say that about many of us.

It is with a great deal of satisfaction that I rise to speak for the first time representing the people of Battleford-Kindersley. They have bestowed upon me a great honour by choosing me to represent them in parliament, and I hope that during my time here I shall be deserving of their trust. For the benefit of hon. members who may not be familiar with the constituency of Battleford-Kindersley, I might mention a few of its attributes. The constituency borders the province of Alberta. The distance from north to south is about 230 miles, and it extends eastward into Saskatchewan for some 100 miles. It is a very large constituency and it is likely to become still larger when redistribution takes place.

It is a wonderful place in which to live, and there are a lot of very hard working people there. We do not have a high unemployment rate in Battleford-Kindersley; when the jobs are not there, it seems people just go and find them. As I say, they are a hard working, aggressive and progressive people. As for the principal cities, I have North Battleford and I share the city of Lloydminster with the hon. member for Vegreville (Mr. Mazankowski).