

Inquiries of the Ministry

[English]

Mr. Mackasey: The hon. gentleman is suggesting that I change the law, which I cannot do, but he has pointed out to the House the very beneficial—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman, as I understood the question, is suggesting that we modify the rules under the law which permit early retirement of people affected by the rationalization of the textile industry. I think it is a beneficial piece of legislation which permits retirement as early as the age of 54 under certain conditions which I believe are very generous. This legislation has been accepted by the House, and it would be impossible for any minister unilaterally to change the law that has been adopted.

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CIGARETTE PRODUCTS BILL**SUGGESTED WITHDRAWAL IN LIGHT OF ACTION BY TOBACCO COMPANIES RESPECTING ADVERTISING**

Mr. William Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand): My question is to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. In view of the announcement yesterday by the Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers Council that their advertising code has been amended to include the major provisions contained in the cigarette products bill, for example, the removal of all radio and television cigarette advertising as of January 1, 1972, is the minister now prepared to abandon the cigarette products bill, so damaging to tobacco growers and so unenforceable?

Hon. John C. Munro (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Without at all agreeing with the conclusions and opinions of the hon. member I would indicate that the government is pleased with the reaction of the tobacco industry generally, but this does not affect the government's intention as expressed in the bill when we have the legislative time necessary to deal with it.

Mr. Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand): May I ask the minister then what are the objectionable features that are lacking in the proposal of the Canadian Tobacco Manufacturers Council?

Mr. Munro: I think that is obvious if one compares the steps they have taken with the provisions of the bill.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**ADOPTION OF NEW PROCEDURES TO ENSURE PROMPT PAYMENT OF CLAIMS**

Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Labour and it arises from the increasing number of welfare applications being made while applicants are awaiting payment of unemployment insurance benefits. Is the Unemployment Insurance Commission adopting any new procedures for prompt payment of claims?

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): I thank the hon. gentleman for his usual courtesy in serving notice of his question. Under the new act which is now in effect there are provisions which permit the assignment of unemployment insurance payments by claimants to welfare officers when financial assistance is needed from the first day of the lay-off period. In so far as the speeding up of claims is concerned, at the hon. member's suggestion I have asked for an investigation of the evidence of the rate at which claims are processed.

Mr. Aiken: The minister mentioned that there was provision in the new act for assignment. May I ask him whether these provisions in the act have now been implemented by regulations or departmental procedures?

Mr. Mackasey: Discussions are now going on at the provincial level between officials of the Unemployment Insurance Commission and the various appropriate departments of the provinces. Meetings are also going on at the local level between local unemployment insurance officers and local welfare officers across Canada.

[Translation]

DELAY IN PAYMENT OF BENEFITS—SUGGESTED DECENTRALIZATION OF SERVICES

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Labour.

Since in my part of the country and in many others also there are many undue delays in handling unemployment benefit claims, does the minister intend providing for decentralization in the administration of the Unemployment Insurance Act so that its provisions may be carried out more quickly and effectively?

[English]

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): This question keeps reoccurring, as it should. The monthly survey of outstanding claims indicates that for the month of August 98.1 per cent of claims were paid on or before time. The approximately 2 per cent of claims which are delayed are delayed for a variety of reasons, one of which is sometimes inefficiency in the department, with which we can deal, but more often because of the fact that claimants do not fill in the forms properly or omit to mail them in some cases and just do not register their claims at all.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker: I suggest to hon. members that if we spend too much time on supplementaries, we will be running out of time very shortly.

SUGGESTED PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN TO INFORM PUBLIC

Mr. Gilbert Rondeau (Shefford): Mr. Speaker, may I ask a supplementary question?

As the public is confused regarding the application of the new Unemployment Insurance Act, does the department intend to use information media such as newspapers and television in order to enlighten the public and thus facilitate the application of this act?