

I have here four workers in my area of Mont-Carmel, Messrs. Roland Drapeau, Jacques Desjardins, René Lévesque, Serge Lévesque, and also Maurice Gagnon. The commission wanted them to go to the north shore, even though they live in Mont-Carmel. They had worked on the north shore before, where they had paid contributions. Circumstances are favourable sometimes to go to the north shore, so they had done so as I did myself when I was a lumberjack. So those five workers made the trip, only to find there were five feet of snow. So they all came back. The money was spent for nothing. It happened, although I am not saying it does too often. Sometimes the bureaucrats have a better understanding of their responsibilities.

We see the results of inquiries, the way they are done. I know some inspectors. They tell me they are paid to do exactly that, and if they don't they can be fired. So they ask all sorts of questions of the unemployed, who don't know much about the statute. They try to trap them. It is an easy job for anybody who is very familiar or simply conversant with that unstraightforward act. There are a lot of ways to get answers under which the assumption can be made that things may have happened in such and such a way. So the inspector helped inflict setbacks. I have the report here. It is astounding indeed to see what happens. It is another way of telling people that all this in the act, which is too complicated.

Some ministers have already told me that they will try to streamline this complex legislation, which is even worse than the one before us. I wonder how this will be possible because there will be tremendous delays and thousands of workers will suffer as a result of a poorly worded legislation. For instance, when they run out of arguments and because there is a mistake in his weekly reports, the unemployed will be told that his claim is in a dormant file—since we do have dormant files, and I believe many public servants are in a dormant state as well, which is unfortunate, because the unemployed, who live at the end of the row in some concession or whatever, right in the middle of a village but several miles away from the Commission's office, have no other income. Some of them are married and have two or three dependents for whom they must provide food and shelter. They are going to get all kinds of silly answers, such as dormant files, technical mistakes, such or such incident which occurred in the payment centre in Montreal.

We have already requested on several occasions—and I was not the only one to make that request—that payments be made through district offices, which would be possible, I believe, and it would be more convenient for those people who are living not too far from the office. However, everything is centralized in Montreal, because—and I will have the opportunity to deal with this subject later—in the back of their minds some people figured that this centralization at the same time would allow officers of National Revenue to deduct the amount of tax deemed deductible so as to better control, later on, the matter of insurability, employment opportunities and so on. They have available numbers and addresses—but I shall deal with the matter later on.

Employment and Immigration

Here is another case of administrative difficulty, that of Mr. Martin of Rivière-Ouelle. His weekly reports came in late, his parents forwarded them to him in Alma, where he had gone to find employment near Lac Saint-Jean. From there, Mr. Martin sent them back to the commission. When commission officers received the reports from Alma, they managed to bungle things. They sent a letter to the claimant asking him to account for the periods he had been away from his area, instead of paying him then what was due to him; there was a delay of one month and a half in the payment of his benefits.

Now, I wonder, why complicate life for people like that.

A further example of confusion: a benefit period established from October 13, 1976, ineligibility from November 20, ineligibility ended on November 29. Now what happens? They realize that the claimant is ineligible on November 20 and on November 29, they say that he is no longer ineligible. Why not take the time to look into the matter before making such decisions?

I have here a letter which I found rather amusing and I would like to read part of it into *Hansard*. A lady is writing to me because she cannot obtain the information she wants. You can judge by yourself. She writes: I inquired at the Rivière-du-Loup office and they replied the first time that the postal strike had delayed the mail. The second time it was the storm. The third time it was the Christmas holiday, and yesterday the New Year's holiday. I am getting impatient, I am entitled to my unemployment insurance. I paid my contributions and I want my benefits. I was going to see a lawyer when someone advised me to write to you.

That is why I have this letter before me now. I understand the problem was finally resolved, but the lady had to wait far too long. It does not make sense to have a claimant wait so long for benefits she is entitled to. According to some officials, the unemployed should listen to the radio and look for job opportunities in papers. If the unemployed moves, there is a penalty, he has to pay for the moving. As you can see, the unemployed pay themselves for the operation of unemployment offices. And in addition to mistakes and delays, some officials have the gall to try and make them pay twice.

● (1530)

And that is not difficult to prove: I am going to do just that right now. The unemployed are stricken by the hundreds from the rolls of the unemployment insurance offices for all sorts of insignificant reasons which result from the administration of unduly complicated legislation and regulations which in no way meet the needs of a great many of the unemployed who are faced with the problem of an extended period of unemployment.

I have hundreds of examples of unemployed people who are the victims of red tape, because the legislation and regulations have been drafted by officials who have never been unemployed or faced with the difficulties of unemployment. I am going to tell you the various ways these guys are taken advantage of: Insurable employment. Let us consider this for a while and see what happens. A person is working in a plant.