

Unemployment Insurance Act

travel. All the people in my riding are in favour of reducing expenses but when we have services taken away from us, when we have taxes going up and the cost of living going up, we can only wonder about the wisdom of the minister in doing this.

• (4:00 p.m.)

Before this debate closes I would like the minister to tell us how long it will be before the central office he set up to replace the other two offices in the area will be closed? When it does close, will the people have to go to Toronto? If this is the march of time then let the minister set up a staff in Toronto and centralize the service but at least leave one person in each of the offices at Orillia and Midland and computerize the operation through the central office.

How logical and how practical is the minister's thinking? If we were to carry this approach through to a definite conclusion we could apply it to cars, boots, machinery equipment and all the other things that we use and buy. Supplies of these articles for my area could be centralized in the city of Toronto and distributed from there. No doubt the price would be cheaper but the over-all cost would be great. You would no longer have small cities and towns with their professional and business people. The effect would be to destroy them.

I now wish to deal with a question that strikes home to a good many people. I speak of the problems of men 65 years of age and over when they seek unemployment insurance benefits. I have in mind one man who is about 66 years old. He had always contributed to the unemployment insurance fund and never drew benefit from it. Now he has been laid off work because he is over 65 years of age and even though he is physically and mentally fit he cannot get another job. He has been told that there is no job available for him. He is not wanted in the work force any more.

Then there is the other side of the picture. I am thinking of a man aged 65 years old who suffers a coronary attack and after a time tries to go back to work but cannot work. When his unemployment insurance runs out he has to go on welfare if he has no other source of funds. This is one of the saddest facts of life. Many of our citizens are capable of working at 65 or 75. What kind of society have we got when we say that a man's age is the determining factor in employment? Do we not need the brain he has developed over the years? I can cite no better example than that

wonderful man in the other chamber who has celebrated his ninetieth birthday, a man who could come into this house and take his place in it any day.

I say, let us get off our high horse. Nobody should be finished and written off at the age of 65 if he is mentally and physically fit. Let us look after properly the fellows under 65 years of age who are not able to work. When unemployment insurance was introduced in 1941, in principle it was for the benefit of those who ran the risk of seasonal unemployment. Today the minister is changing the rules. It looks to me as if this legislation is now going to cover everybody. We are changing the principle. In other words, the minister is bringing in modified welfare.

I now wish to speak about the farming situation. I am not going to take up the time of the house by speaking at length on it. Possibly on clause by clause examination of the bill I will have more to say about it. A great many farmers are disturbed about unemployment insurance. On dairy farms and beef farms work goes on the year round. The people who work on those farms object to paying unemployment insurance contributions and the farmers or operators of the farms object to paying them. They are altogether different from the cash crop farmer. Yet no distinction is made.

When did you ever hear of a man being unemployed on a dairy farm? If a dairy farm employee quits it is almost impossible to find somebody to take his place. Why should this legislation be compulsorily applied to these people? This is a complete departure from the insurance principle of 1941. I shall have more to say about this matter when the bill is being discussed in committee. If the minister would like to talk to me in the meantime about the possibility of putting somebody back in the office at Orillia and in the office at Midland I would be glad to talk to him and show him some of the letters I have received.

Mr. Norman Fawcett (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, it is not my intention to take up too much of the time of the house or to hold up this amending bill because we in this party realize the value of it. As my colleague the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) has said, we accept this legislation because at this time with the increase in the cost of living we certainly feel there should be an increase in unemployment insurance benefits. However, also like my colleague I believe the time is long overdue for major amendments to the