

Adjournment Debate

Killarney in Nickel Belt, which has an unemployment rate in the winter of 40 per cent to 60 per cent. This community has put in six applications for LIP grants which would employ most of their unemployed. Only two have been approved.

• (2210)

Killarney is not an isolated case. The municipal leaders in my riding have been on the phone constantly to me asking why their particular projects have not been approved. I think other hon. members in this House have had similar experiences.

I quote from a letter sent to me by Mr. Paul Engstrom, reeve of the township of Ratter and Dunnet:

Thank you for sending me a copy of the letter you wrote to the Honourable R. K. Andras, Minister of Manpower and Immigration regarding our LIP project No. K1421.

January 8, 1973 Kona Construction commenced erection of the shell for the arena and community hall—completion date of eight weeks. At present 10 men are employed.

Had we in any way anticipated there would be no grant, we would not have proceeded with this construction during the winter months. The higher costs entailed will devour the \$5,000 our fund raising committee raised last year, holding raffles, dances, beer fest and canvasses.

The men presently employed on our arena building would most probably be drawing unemployment insurance and a vast number of men have visited the site seeking employment.

All money allotted by the government towards this project would be at least visible, that something had been accomplished. I wonder if that can be said of all projects that have been approved by government.

I do hope the minister will reconsider, and allot us the same as other municipalities are receiving, in all fairness.

Yours truly,

Paul Engstrom (Reeve)

It seems to these people and myself that the government is more interested in paying them unemployment insurance benefits than stimulating employment in their community. In Nickel Belt riding there were 35 LIP applications and only six have been approved. There are about 7,000 persons registered with the Sudbury manpower office, indicative of the high unemployment in our area. Yet only one-sixth of our LIP applications have been accepted. The unemployed of Nickel Belt, not unlike the unemployed in the rest of Canada want jobs, not "pogey" and certainly not welfare.

I therefore suggest to the minister that, if he is really interested in reducing the number of persons on the UIC rolls, he should appropriate additional funds, probably from other less popular make-work programs, for financing more of the LIP applications.

Mr. Len Marchand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, this matter is not within my jurisdiction and I apologize to the hon. member that neither the minister nor the parliamentary secretary is here this evening. However, I have taken note of what he has said.

Mr. Rodriguez: Just approve my LIP applications.

Mr. Marchand (Kamloops-Cariboo): Let me assure the hon. member that I will take this matter up immediately

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

with the minister and the parliamentary secretary and give him the answers he requires as quickly as possible.

Mr. Rodriguez: You mean the approvals.

Mr. Marchand (Kamloops-Cariboo): The hon. member says "approvals." We would all like approvals for certain projects which we have, priorities that we as individual members have. As I say, I will provide the hon. member with the answers as quickly as possible.

[Translation]

SOCIAL SECURITY—OLD AGE PENSION—POSSIBILITY OF LOWERING AGE OF ELIGIBILITY TO 60

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, old age security is indeed a question of the highest concern for the people of this country.

Recently I put a question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) to find out from him whether the officials of his department were looking into the possibility of lowering the age of eligibility to 60.

The minister did not bother to answer my question and so I thought it was my duty to bring up the issue during the late show. Mr. Speaker, we are not here to play politics; nevertheless the silence the minister is keeping on this matter could be interpreted as a refusal to commit himself on account of political repercussions.

In fact, if the minister does answer in the affirmative, he will be agreeing with the Social Credit Party of Canada which advocated during the last election campaign, the necessity of lowering the eligibility age from 65 to 60. Conversely, if he replies in the negative, he will be revealing how little attention he pays to the claims of the people.

Mr. Speaker, if there is a political dilemma, it is out of place. I wish the minister would answer for the very simple reason that there is at the present time an absolute necessity for lowering the eligibility age. And I should like to mention three major reasons which, I think, support my plea of urgency.

Having studied hundreds of cases that were referred to us, we know very well that it is absolutely impossible nowadays to find a job at 60.

Mr. Speaker, when finding a job has become difficult even for young people aged 20 or 25, one must recognize that after reaching 60 it becomes impossible.

Those people are therefore unable to earn money. If people after 60 cannot find work, what else can they do? At the present time, they must apply to the Department of Social Affairs as far as Quebec is concerned. They are then given low hand-outs, since their needs are assessed—for example in the case of a couple of 60 to 65 years of age, \$78 monthly, an amount which they must use for clothes and food as well as for small personal effects. In my opinion, the human being is being ridiculed.

If the old age security pension was granted at 60 years of age, we would settle the problem for all families where the head is 60 or over.

Mr. Speaker, there is another important argument: by allowing those people to draw an old age security pension,