

Therefore the five were heard in the province of British Columbia. It was the unanimous decision of that court of revision that they should be paid. The two who went to Alberta appeared before a board of referees. The Alberta decision was also unanimous that they should be paid.

Those seven employees are being subjected to something else. The Unemployment Insurance Commission is going to appeal that decision, taking it to a board of referees. Although this took place on January 3, those employees do not yet know when they will go before an umpire for a decision. This is a cowardly attitude on the part of the Unemployment Insurance Commission. The situation in which these employees found themselves was unavoidable. They had no strike vote and no decision as to when they will return to work, yet they are compelled to go through this kind of procedure.

The decision of the umpire has not yet been finalized. However, if the decision is against those employees, it can be used in any similar incident. The employees do not have the resources to protect themselves. There are another 40 employees of Sawchuck Trucking involved in the same dispute. They, too, have been told they have to appear before a board of referees. After having been out since January 3, only half have been called in for the referee's decision and half are still waiting. They may have to go through the same procedure.

I think that before the minister and the government bring a bill into this House, they should clean up the act we now have. Let us begin to recognize the needs of these people. It is a tragedy that those who pay into the program have to wait for these kinds of decisions. The employee, the employer and the referees all agree, but they have to wait for the commission. That is very wrong. I agree with the process, but I disagree with what has happened in this case.

I wish to talk a bit about what we should be looking at in our unemployment insurance program. There are almost a million people unemployed, and we have an unemployment centre that does not have the true feeling of the people. That is of great concern. The attitude of the unemployment centre at this time is to try to deny the unemployed person the benefits, for which he has paid. It is time the Minister of Employment and Immigration called in the top union executives and business people to sit around the table and begin looking at where we are going in Canada today. What are we going to do about our problems? We have one million people unemployed. There are people not paying into the program. Possibly I should relate some of the revenue we are losing.

It is important to note in this connection that for every one job created in producing a resource, another six are created in processing it, and yet these are the jobs we export. Unemployment now costs us \$5 billion annually in lost production of goods and services, \$1 billion in federal tax revenues, \$5 billion in unemployment insurance pay-outs. The pay-out for unemployment insurance in 1981-82 is estimated at \$5.2 billion.

The minister comes in with a bill that will reduce the application date for part-time workers. The minister and the government should be ashamed with what is happening. The bank interest rate in Canada today has virtually closed down

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the housing industry in British Columbia. The lumber industry is almost at a standstill with regard to new development and so on. There are lay-offs in those industries. There is a need for housing yet we are paying out unemployment insurance—when the commission decides to do so. What are we doing?

● (2150)

I asked the minister about an Outreach program which would try to help some of these people. I travelled to Windsor with a delegation of our group and I saw some of the problems in the Windsor area, also. I witnessed the unification of that community in an effort to relieve some of those who are suffering because of lay-offs in the auto industry. If the minister does not realize the gravity of the situation, it is about time a delegation from his party began to travel the country to see at first hand what the needs of the people are.

I want to talk for a moment about the waiting period under the unemployment insurance regulations. Take the case of a man who has been working for a company and who is suddenly laid off. He is in serious trouble to begin with, but now he is confronted with a waiting period. It is as if a man found himself obliged to go to hospital only to be told he had to wait for two weeks for hospital benefits because he did not qualify for treatment. Assistance is needed right away.

In British Columbia, people come into my office in Cranbrook on an almost daily basis with grievances of this kind, and I am told to phone the social welfare office. I say to the minister that this is not a social problem, it is an employment problem, and we should be regarding it in that light. We should not be looking after people under social programs paid for by the taxpayers when the situation has clearly been brought about by a slowdown in industry.

I should like to refer to a communication dated June 26, 1980, which was sent to all members of Parliament by the Minister of Employment and Immigration. Indeed, I should like to read it verbatim before commenting further. It states:

As you know, my portfolio embraces a number of important programs which are highly visible at the local level. Employment counselling, placement, unemployment insurance and immigrant settlement, to name but a few, are examples of the day to day services rendered in the community by officials of Employment and Immigration Canada.

The focal points for the delivery of these services are the local Canada Employment Centres—

In my area, it could be Cranbrook, or it could be Penticton, or it could be Terrace.

—and for immigration matters, the Canada Immigration Centres.

I would like to invite you and your staff to take full advantage of the expertise in the local offices of the commission when constituency needs arise in relation to any of the above programs. I am sure you will find the CEC and CIC managers to be knowledgeable, conscientious and responsive to the requirements of their clients.

While recommending that you bring constituency matters to the attention of my local office managers to better facilitate—

In Creston, which is about 65 miles away from Cranbrook, there is a suboffice, but the suboffice is only allowed to take in material and send it to the central office, and the central office sends it wherever it may be necessary. I believe that