

### *Unemployment Insurance*

exactly the same position as anybody else who contributes; he has the normal waiting period, and providing he has the proper amount of insurable weeks of contribution during the previous year, he has no more waiting period than any other person. There is no requirement for requalification either. That is a very considerable limitation on the picture which the hon. member for Halton-Wentworth painted at the beginning.

There are also some qualifications to be made which considerably change the first part of the motion before us. To refer to the words and the clause just before the one I previously referred to, the motion reads:

... a contributor ... who is not resident in Canada, cannot receive benefits upon becoming unemployed outside of Canada ...

That is not true in all cases, and again these limitations are of considerable importance. The first of these, as the hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Stollery) has pointed out, is that where there is a reciprocal arrangement with another country, there is an exception. The United States is the only country with which we have a reciprocal arrangement at the present time. Another exception mentioned by the hon. member for Spadina was where a Canadian claimant in a foreign country falls sick and requires hospitalization in that foreign country. During his period of actual hospitalization in the foreign country he is covered by the Canadian unemployment insurance program.

There is a third and important exception which is in the process of being established, and this we could not have expected to have come to the attention of the hon. member for Halton-Wentworth because it is not yet entirely a matter of law. I can say this afternoon on behalf of the minister and the unemployment insurance commission that there is the intention to make this further change with respect to sickness and maternity benefits. The new policy would make provision for claimants abroad to claim sickness or maternity benefits providing their residency abroad was due to their participation in insurable employment or their spouse's participation in insurable employment. It follows, of course, that the individuals would also have to qualify in their own right.

The unemployment insurance commission has adopted a policy which can be implemented by regulation. Administrative procedures are now in the process of being worked out and the policy is expected to be implemented in short order. The bulk of the claimants for whom serious questions have been raised include service men and women, members of the Canadian public service abroad, and employees of Canadian multinational corporations who are working in insurable employment abroad.

The proposed solution, which would allow for the payment of sickness and maternity benefits, would not necessitate reciprocal agreements with other countries concerned and, therefore, would not have any of the disadvantages which might be attached to paying regular benefits. The individuals concerned could file their claims through a Canadian office designated to handle such claims. There would be no need to police availability as entitlement would be based on the adequacy of medical evidence. The act would not have to be amended and administratively we could expect, particularly in large armed forces bases overseas, that the staff would receive

[Mr. MacGuigan.]

some training material which would enable them to assist claimants in making application.

Finally, there would be no need to seek a change in the coverage regulations which are the responsibility of the Department of National Revenue, Taxation, as the commission could implement this change by amendment to section 169 of the regulations.

It should be recognized, Mr. Speaker, that for the most part Canadians who are serving abroad and who are in insurable employment have contracts of service with employers, mainly with the Canadian government, which would not leave them unemployed overseas. Any termination would include transportation back to Canada. In this event, the individual concerned could file a claim and would be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits as if his credits were established in Canada. Those people who go overseas will become eligible for maternity benefits; for example, a servicewoman who, while granted leave without pay by the armed forces, receives no further remuneration would be eligible to receive unemployment insurance benefits while abroad for the designated 15 week period. This would also hold true for those persons who became sick and could establish that fact by medical evidence. Since there is no need in these cases to establish availability or capability, then there would be no difficulty in paying these persons without the need for reciprocal arrangements which would cause administrative and other difficulties.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, this policy has recently been adopted by the unemployment insurance commission and it is the intention of the commission and the minister to change the regulations to implement the policy. This matter had been brought forcefully to the attention of the minister and the commission by the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Richardson) on behalf of armed forces employees. As a result of this and other representations it was decided that a change in the regulations should be sought. However, to make the change on the broader scale suggested by the motion would, it seems to me, open a can of worms that would be very difficult to deal with.

● (1750)

We have had UIC problems in this country. For example, as hon. members know, there have been difficulties in enforcing all the regulations and ensuring that claimants are available for work. We must recognize that there are not any officers of the department in Europe who act in a policing capacity. Unless we enter into reciprocal arrangements with European countries, we could not take advantage of their services. Indeed, their conception of unemployment insurance is sufficiently different from ours to make it hard to say whether or not we could use their administrative services. We do not know whether their services would enable them to cover the claimants we might have.

There are skiers in this country who have gone on holiday to Banff by taking advantage of their unemployment insurance benefits. If the hon. member's suggestion were adopted, we should have people taking their holidays in the Alps, or in Austria, at the expense of the Canadian taxpayer. It seems to me that that is not what the hon. member wishes to suggest.