

Adjournment Debate

should be applied equally. This was not the case in so far as this provision is concerned.

If the reason the government is recommending the removal of section 28 of the act is that the payment of the three week benefit when a person becomes unemployed will be done by computer rather than by hand, and that not many people have taken advantage of that provision, then perhaps we should consider whether or not it has some merit. When I inquired of our member on the committee, he indicated that this had not been abused, or at least there had been very little discussion about abuses, but the indication was that it also had not provided many jobs.

● (2150)

If it did not provide for what it was supposed to, then the person who received the three weeks pay would subsequently go on to regular benefits, and when he did he had to make up the three weeks which he had already been paid. The only time he received anything for nothing, and that would be doubtful, would be if he was to suffer any further unemployment at some time in the future in the benefit year. However, it would only apply, and it would only be a benefit, to the person who was off for a week or two weeks, or less than three weeks, and received the benefit and did not have to repay it. In other words, if this was not a factor, was not abused, and was not a big cost factor, it seems to me we should leave it in because it does mean that the person would at least be paid in the first three weeks.

Though the officials will not agree, in my area it is impossible to receive a benefit payment in less than four weeks, and not likely before the sixth week. Normally it is considerably longer than four weeks, and there are few who receive it in four weeks. As a result the three weeks is paid within a period of a month and a half, and families earning \$6,000 just do not have enough money to keep themselves for six weeks with the cost of living as it is today.

The unemployed in my area go to municipal welfare offices and receive assistance while waiting for their cheques. They make an assignment to the welfare department. When their money comes from the UIC, the welfare agency is paid back. However, it seems to me that in many cases we are asking municipalities to cover the period during which the application is being processed, the time in which the separation slip is sent in and the cards are made up, when they are sent to Belleville, and a cheque is sent from Belleville to the claimant. In most cases that is four weeks plus. It is normally a six week period, and I suggest that in paying this three weeks pay we are really paying for the inability of the UIC to make that payment within six weeks.

If the minister thinks he can do something about this problem, I wish he would tell me what it is. I remember in 1971 sitting in the committee, and we were told by UIC officials that there would be a cheque within a three week period. I told them no one was getting paid within three weeks, and we had only a two week waiting period at that time. We extended it another week. It was just impossible to collect within that time. It worked out that I was right and they were wrong. It takes six weeks for an applicant to

receive that money in my area, and if anything goes wrong it could take up to ten weeks or more. It cannot be less than six weeks, and I should like some hon. members who think we should move to this three week waiting period to tell me why. This has very seldom been abused in my area, and it has been useful. If the officials are pushed hard, they will issue a cheque by hand for someone, but it is not usually within the six weeks, it is usually longer than that, and they will issue a cheque because the act gives them the right to write one cheque within three weeks.

If we take away that right a person through no fault of his own will not receive any money for a period of six to eight weeks. That is two months, or four pay days, and a person living on \$6,000 sure as hell is not going to get by for two months without going to the welfare department. If we keep this three weeks and we do not need it, then what is lost? If it provides a means of creating employment in the cities, that is obviously the only place it could work; it cannot work in small communities. It cannot work for the simple reason that they cannot get the three weeks pay. From where will they get it? They cannot get it from the sub-offices in my area.

A person could drive 150 miles and talk to the officials in Timmins, but to whom could he talk? When a person drives to Timmins to talk to UIC, he talks to the dumbest person there because that is the last person hired and the least qualified. That person answers the telephone and is also on the desk. It should be the manager on the desk meeting the public, or at least someone who is able to give some answers.

So if a person drives 300 miles there and back, he has talked to a girl hired off the street two weeks before who hardly knows what UIC stands for, let alone what the program is about. Whoever drives to Timmins is not likely to receive the three weeks pay anyway, but there might be a chance. If a person were really belligerent, swore at everyone and kicked the door down, he might receive it, but it is always possible that a member of parliament can telephone the office stating that this person has not received any money for the last six or eight weeks and how about issuing a cheque.

On occasion the officials will be generous and issue a cheque, because under this act they have the right to issue that three weeks cheque. If we take away the three weeks, how are they going to issue one even if they want to do so? Until it is totally cleared through the computer they will not be able to issue a cheque. The only way is through this loophole which has been established. If we expended some energy on job placement agencies, which would likely mean the elimination of Manpower centres, this would be a better route, but until we do that we will not be able to provide the three weeks pay, or expect people to get jobs during that three weeks.

There are probably 10 people unemployed for every available job, and while in cities like Ottawa or Toronto it is quite possible that there is room for mobility in a region, in an area like mine where the pulp and paper companies are all shut down, where the wood industry is in serious difficulty and where the mining industry is also in serious difficulty, it is not possible. So I suggest that unless the government is willing to give us some justification as to