

Unemployment Insurance Act

would create problems. I know in certain cases that they are not, although they do give medical certificates to claimants referred to them. In the above-mentioned case of February 18, he is told that his claim which took effect on November 18 is considered as his initial claim and that up to now he has received five weeks of benefits.

At that time, he still had two weeks of sick benefits to receive and he is advised that he will get them in a fortnight. He is also told that since January 20, he is qualified to obtain the ordinary benefits, since the commission has received the authorization from his physician that he could perform some light work and that the claimant was available since January 25. One must not forget that this last letter is dated February 18 and that the person concerned received his benefits during five weeks, as of November 18, 1973.

I could give numerous other examples, but I do not wish to waste time in this regard. I agree with the sponsor of the bill. I also agree that it be passed. However, before concluding, I believe it to be in order to sum up the matter thus: as a result of the complicated legislation drafted by technocrats who have never known the difficulties of unemployed people, a confusing situation has arisen, with the following results: months of delay in the payment of benefits, overpayment of benefits, benefits twice-paid and, in some instances, no payments at all.

All of this due to all kinds of reasons, as insignificant as may be: compromised eligibility, for a start, because of complementary periods, qualifying periods, prolonged periods, to which one must add waiting periods, and leave credits considered as earnings. And to complete the picture, payment procedures were centralized by organizing a team of push-button civil servants fed with often erroneous statistics, who attempt to control the situation to the best of their ability, with more failures than success, by using computers that are out of order as a result of an overload due to income tax returns, so that mistakes mushroom, and unemployed persons suffer from the situation.

It is a sort of summary of the legislation's results. It has brought in certain benefits, I would say a lot of benefits, to many unemployed. But there is so much complications in the technicalities of the regulations that the legislation gives rise to great anxiety for the families of the unemployed who are waiting for unemployment benefits which are not coming.

So, I will conclude by saying that I support fully the proposed legislation, and I would appreciate a lot when time will come to bring forth changes to the legislation—which badly needs them—that the suggestion made today not be forgotten.

[*English*]

Mr. Gilbert Parent (St. Catharines): Madam Speaker, my hon. friend from Nickel Belt and I have known each other for many years and, while we have not always been in agreement on the various issues that we have discussed, I must say that today we do stand shoulder to shoulder at least on this particular aspect of the bill he wishes to have passed. I would hope that the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) would not think I am simply helping to

[Mr. Dionne (Kamouraska).]

talk the bill out by giving him all this support which he so richly deserves.

Mr. Rodriguez: I am watching the clock.

Mr. Parent: I might preface my remarks by suggesting that should this bill be talked out, which I hope it is not, the hon. member could perhaps come to the manpower committee, of which I am a member, where I am sure we would receive him and his suggestion with open arms.

The hon. member for Gander-Willington (Mr. Baker) earlier mentioned that there could be an extension of one category which would be useful so far as unemployment insurance benefits were concerned; among others he said that long term illness could be taken into consideration. One aspect of workmen's compensation that I should like to see corrected is that when a man has to stay off work this is counted against him when he comes to draw unemployment insurance benefits. However, I hope we will not take a piecemeal approach to the problem but rather that the comments that have been made will be regarded as an overview of the problems sometimes faced in administering unemployment insurance benefits.

I read some time ago a book called "Future Shock" by Alvin Tofler, and in the book he said people will continue to go to school, not simply for a few years and then leave school never to return, but as an ongoing project right into adult years and beyond. It seems to me this is one aspect that the hon. member for Nickel Belt might also consider.

Having been a teacher, and I understand still being a teacher in good standing with the board, I know the hon. member will appreciate that people who try to better themselves, if you will by pursuing educational studies at school, should in no way be penalized for doing so. If people who have worked for a number of years wish to take a few months or even a few years off to further their education, when their educational term is over and if they are not immediately employable, then I think they should be eligible to draw benefits for which they have worked over the years, though I would not suggest they should draw unemployment insurance benefits while they are actually at school.

I should like to address myself specifically to the cost of unemployment insurance benefits and to pose a question and possibly answer it, though not necessarily for the enlightenment of my hon. friend who, I am sure, is aware of many of the facts and figures that I will be quoting.

Mr. Rodriguez: As long as my hon. friend is not wrong.

Mr. Parent: The hon. member knows that if I am wrong I will be the first to admit it. However, sometimes mistakes are made inadvertently and I am sure the hon. member will at least grant me a small error along the way if one is made.

To return to my remarks, Madam Speaker, what is the cost of UIC? There were changes made in unemployment insurance premiums recently. Maximum insurable earnings under the Canada Pension Plan were changed on January 1, and this means higher unemployment insurance payments for anyone earning over \$8,840 a year, and higher Canada Pension Plan payments for anyone earning over \$6,600. Moreover, certain salaried employees who