

Unemployment Insurance Act

on the advisory committee, on the commission itself or on any board that has dealings with the unemployment insurance commission so that the point of view of women can be brought forcibly to the attention of men. Men are notoriously unable to understand the problems and attitudes of women. We are not gifted that way. Women apparently find it much easier to understand the peculiarities of men. I think it is important to have the women's point of view presented, and the hon. member for Hamilton West has done that extremely well. It is of great advantage to this committee to have that presentation made to us.

The second point I wanted to dwell on was the reduction in time of benefit from 51 weeks to 30 weeks. I was interested to hear the remarks this morning made by the hon. member for Cape Breton South who told us that figure was going to be changed to 36 weeks. I am not sure whether he has now become a spokesman for the government. However, I know that 36 weeks was suggested in committee.

Mr. Gillis: It was moved in committee as an amendment by the hon. member for Spadina.

Mr. Churchill: That amendment was declared to be out of order. It may have appeared again as a recommendation. But when the hon. member for Spadina makes a recommendation or moves an amendment in the committee, does it then follow that we can assume it is going to be incorporated in the bill?

Mr. Gillis: I think it is a good indication.

Mr. Churchill: My hon. friend is closer than I am to the sources of information on the other side of the house.

Mr. Gillis: I have been longer on committees than has the hon. member.

Mr. Churchill: In committee I objected to the submission of the commissioner concerning this particular matter. I want to read the paragraph to which I raised objection. It is to be found at page 16 of the statement by the chief commissioner. The paragraph reads as follows:

Moreover, it has been found that considerable numbers of those who remain on benefit for long periods, i.e., in excess of 30 weeks, are persons who have to all intents withdrawn from the labour market. Many of these persons go through the motions of lodging an application for employment in order to obtain benefit but are not genuinely in search of work. The drain on the fund from this type of claimant is considerable but this is not the most important reason for eliminating such claims. What is really important is that the fund should only be used for the proper purpose and that benefit should be paid only to persons who are genuinely unemployed and seeking work.

[Mr. Churchill.]

It was pointed out to us that the people who draw benefits for more than 30 weeks—between 30 and 51 under the present act—are small in number, constituting about, if I am not mistaken, 3.5 per cent or certainly the amount of money paid out is only 3.5 per cent of the total.

Mrs. Fairclough: That is the number of claimants.

Mr. Churchill: The hon. member for Hamilton West corrects me and tells me that of the number of claimants, 3.5 per cent are those who draw more than the 30 weeks of benefit. It was pointed out to us that these are normally in the older age group. The argument presented by the commission is that these people are those who have retired from employment, generally at the age of 65, are on pension and are not really in the labour market. I thought that was a negative approach to the problem in this way. The paragraph from which I quoted uses words like these, "but are not genuinely in search of work", and again, "that benefit should be paid only to persons who are genuinely unemployed and seeking work." The impression created in my mind from the committee proceedings and the discussions we had there was that people of 65 and over were not genuinely seeking work and therefore should not be entitled to this longer period of benefit.

I have here an article taken from the *Winnipeg Tribune* of May 31, 1955, written by Thomas Green. It deals with the older age group in our population. Incidentally, he points out that those in the 65 and over category are increasing in numbers. In his article he also has this to say:

In 1951 208,000 of the country's 504,000 males over 65 had jobs . . .

That means that two-fifths of the people in the older age bracket actually had jobs. How can you say then that they are not seeking work and are not anxious to be employed? The 300,000 odd who are not employed are surely no different from the 200,000 who are employed. We can reasonably assume that they have also been seeking work, are unemployed through no fault of their own, and therefore are entitled to draw unemployment insurance. I fail to follow the reasoning of the unemployment insurance commission with regard to this particular fact.

I believe studies are under way in an attempt to discover how best to deal with those who are in the older age bracket. I think the studies have already shown that most people are anxious to continue to work while they have health and vigour. It has been shown time and time again that many