

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

minister about it. He was cautious. He was stubborn—maybe I should say he was firm. In my own area he closed an office in Orillia which served 40,000 people and one at Midland which served about the same number.

**Mr. Nicholson:** Would the hon. member permit a question? Did I not point out to him at the time that it was not the minister who closed these offices? Was it not a commission responsible to parliament that closed the offices? Is not the minister only the agent or instrument through whom they respond in this house? The offices were closed by the commission.

**Mr. Rynard:** I accept that explanation but I tell the minister that he is the one who is responsible. If he is not head of that commission the people have no representative.

**Mr. Nicholson:** Then you had better press for a change in the act.

**Mr. Rynard:** We had better change it right here, because if parliament does not control these things the people have no effective representation.

Orillia is a town with a population close to 20,000 and the population of Midland is around 15,000. The minister says that centralization is necessary. I talked to him about this. He and I are on friendly terms and we discussed the matter. When I was through I still thought he was stubborn. Perhaps he would like me to use a more polite word and say he was firm. He said that centralization was necessary in the interests of economy and efficiency, that the computer age was here. When we look at the record of this government in the field of expenditure, most of us would doubt the wisdom and economy of what has been done. It is strange to note that out of 41 offices closed, two were in the Simcoe area.

**Mr. Nicholson:** Again I do not like to interrupt but, as a matter of privilege, I am sure the hon. member would not want to go on record as saying that only 41 offices were closed. Over a hundred, perhaps several hundred, have been closed.

**Mr. Rynard:** Yes, I will correct that statement. I was reading the last figure I had here. I have a list. Eighteen offices were closed across Canada in 1965, 47 were closed in 1966 and 41 more in 1967, making a total of more than 100 offices. I was referring to the 1967 figure. Will more bureaucratic control produce the advantages which are claimed? All

[Mr. Rynard.]

that has happened so far is an increase in the cost to the taxpayers. As I say, it is strange that out of the 41 offices closed last year two were in the Simcoe area. I do not think there was anything political about the decision. One of the offices was in Orillia where the rate of unemployment is higher than average. I pointed this out to the minister and so did the town council of Orillia in a brief which they presented. The council said a great many people would be inconvenienced. Is it really the function of governments to inconvenience the people? People are being put to the trouble of driving up to 42 miles one way in that riding at considerable expense to themselves. If anyone says this is not the case, I have example after example showing that it has happened. I shall not take up the time of the house by citing them but I will give them privately to the hon. gentleman if he wishes.

The submission says that many of the residents require personal assistance in making their applications because of language difficulty. This is true and I can substantiate it from letters I have received. It says that many of the residents require personal assistance because of their age or lack of education. Some are without transportation. Every one of these statements is correct. If the minister wants proof I will be glad to furnish it. People in the areas affected have come to the conclusion that the authorities do not believe in bringing the service to them but rather in taking it away. After the events of the past week when we witnessed the defiance of parliament on blue Monday, we can understand that the government has lost touch with the people. It is a regrettable attitude. The hon. member who represents the Liberal party in York-Humber (Mr. Cowan) indicated that the cabinet and the Prime Minister did not pay much attention even to their own supporters. Well, the time will come when the electors will settle these matters.

Now I should like to ask the minister whether any senior members of the commission's staff, say those with five years service or more, have quit because of the reorganization in the area I have mentioned. How many people engaged in the unemployment insurance service were forced to move? How many could not find suitable accommodation and were obliged to drive 50 miles to work? How much money was saved by the new arrangements? I point out that on the other side of the coin there is the inconvenience caused to applicants and the money and time spent in