

Unemployment Insurance Act

ing a claim either because they were a repeater or because of the new entrance provision, there were approximately 1,170 people affected.

By adding that figure to the 7,046 registered beneficiaries, we come up with about 8,216, which is approximately 18 per cent of the total for the province of Nova Scotia. We are looking at 18 per cent of the total beneficiaries in Nova Scotia, and one has to consider that in that area we have probably about 7 per cent of the total population of the province and probably some of the lowest salaries earned in Nova Scotia. If we look at the federal-regional rate scale, it shows that South West Nova has the lowest salary scale in Nova Scotia.

I reiterate this point, because I looked at *Hansard* the other night and perhaps I did not make it clear enough then as to the acute problem that the continued use of variable entrance requirement will create in South West Nova. I look at it again in light of the fact that I reviewed the projects under this bill, and I have to say that I am upset that we are continuing the use of the variable entrance requirement. First, people in South West Nova do not have a definite amount of time that they must work in order to qualify. Second, the use of the money under the new financing arrangement is not going into job creation.

I stop at that point because the use of the unemployment insurance rates based on economic regions in South West Nova has had a cruel effect in that area because of the amount of employment created by the employment programs. I say this because in the past under Canada Works it was based on the unemployment rate. If you go to employment strategies it was based on unemployment rates, based on an economic region which did not truly give a good sample of the population that was unemployed in that area at specific times in the year. It goes back to the need for all sorts of employment programs, such as the employment tax credit which does not apply directly. It has some application in the area but it perhaps created about \$100,000 worth of job creation last year out of a total package of whatever was used in government tax credits. Yet, that type of employment incentive does not apply to a rural area where the business end of it cannot take that up as a program. They need economic employment stimulation.

I want to say again tonight that I look forward to this bill in committee. I look forward to pressing the minister to find a solution. I ask him not to wait for two years and have two winters of hard times where the unemployment rate for stamps in a given area is not known. I will continue to press this, particularly in light of this bill, and I look forward to seeing what happens in committee. I must say that I find it hard to think that the Unemployment Insurance Commission needs 18 months. I am glad that there is another study under way, but I hope that there will be lots of consultations with the members. Perhaps in the future some of the members will be listened to in terms of the problems which have been suggested to the minister in the past, here in this House and in committee.

I thank the House for the time allotted to me. I am sure there are many other speakers who wish to speak on this bill and I look forward to the bill coming to committee.

Mr. Sid Parker (Kootenay East-Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak on Bill C-3, an act to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act. I am disappointed that the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) is not in the House. I realize that he has just had one bill passed. However, I feel that he will have difficulty in putting this one through.

I am very happy to follow the hon. member for South West Nova (Miss Campbell). I wish to comment briefly on an item which she overlooked. In the press release in which the minister announced Bill C-3, he noted that the government plans to introduce regulating changes that would alter the minimum insurability provision. Instead of being required to work 20 hours per week, it would be 15 hours per week.

● (2140)

There is a very serious discrimination against pregnant women who require unemployment insurance benefits. While the minister has looked at the part-time workers, he has discriminated against what is called the magic ten area of women in the work force.

I wish to relate some of my remarks this evening to problems in Kootenay East-Revelstoke, one of the highest unemployment areas in British Columbia. We have the problem of people having to drive between 90 and 100 miles to register for unemployment insurance. The office is so busy that their applications are sent to Terrace to be processed, approximately 1,100 miles away. These people who paid into the unemployment insurance program while in the work force, and through their employer and the government, have to wait through this procedure.

What I resent even more than that kind of procedure is the fact that I received a letter from the Minister of Employment and Immigration just recently telling me that he would prefer if I would deal with problems of unemployment in my riding because his ministry is too busy to deal with them personally. He tried to encourage me to deal with them in my own riding. How can I do that when applications are sent 1,100 miles away to be processed?

I want to deal further with what is happening in my riding. On January 3 there were seven explosive workers who worked on a contract in Fernie. The contract was in a special area of work. The Kaiser resource employees took a strike vote and went on strike January 3. Even though these seven explosive workers were not part of that contract, they were laid off. They received notification from their employer that they were being laid off because of a strike.

These workers applied for unemployment insurance. After driving 100 miles to apply and then back home, they were told they did not qualify and must therefore appear before a court of revision, although a court of revision had been held prior to that on a similar claim that year. The unanimous decision of that court of revision was that these employees would qualify and they were therefore paid.

The unique part of this is that of the seven employees, five were from British Columbia and two were from Alberta.