

Unemployment Insurance Act

ment insurance is, in truth, social insurance, not a general answer to Canadians' income needs, regardless of their nature.

This House is considering amendments to the unemployment insurance legislation in Bill C-27. These are designed to make the unemployment insurance program more effective and more responsive in its true role. These amendments are quite rightly designed to reinforce the insurance character of the program and emphasize the insurance principles upon which it is founded.

I do not dispute that adoptive parents may very well need some form of support in their very worth-while endeavours. Indeed, in many ways the role of the adoptive parents is often harder than that of the natural parent. But I find I cannot support this motion because I firmly believe that if help for some adoptive parents is needed, unemployment insurance is not the right way to provide this help. I hope we can consider other ways to do this through different programs in the federal as well as in the provincial field.

Mr. F. A. Philbrook (Halton): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Dartmouth-Halifax East (Mr. Forrestall) and the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) for proposing and seconding the motion we are considering. Hon. members show, by proposing such motions, a concern for human need in society. The motion we are considering reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should give consideration to the advisability of introducing legislation to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act to provide benefits to the adoptive parent of an infant, similar to the maternity benefits now provided to workers who are unemployed due to pregnancy.

Clearly, the motion involves two areas of concern. One part of the motion recognizes that there is a need for people to adopt somebody else's child. The motion speaks of "an infant" but, of course, not only infants are adopted. The other part of the motion concerns the fulfillment of that need, and this is the part which raises difficulty. Nobody will deny the importance of the first part of the motion; for the need in this regard is evident in all parts of the country and all parts of society. However, the proposal that the Unemployment Insurance Act should be the mechanism for providing benefits to the adoptive parent can lead to great difficulties, especially at the present time.

Let me talk about adoption. Many of the points I shall raise have been made previously but I think they are worth repeating. Anyone who adopts a child deserves our greatest admiration. It is difficult enough these days for natural parents to bring up their own children; their children confront a changing world, a world in which our social and moral values are changing. It is difficult to raise children, and expensive. In fact, it is so expensive that many young people are not having children. But we must have them, for society must continue. We must do our best to raise good citizens. Everything I have said about natural children applies to adopted babies. They are fun to have around, and gratifying. But bringing up children entails sacrifice. For them we give up part of ourselves and in that way we help, not only the child but society in general.

[Mr. Condon.]

Difficult though it is to adopt a baby, it may be even more difficult to adopt an older child who may have gone from foster home to foster home. The history of such children is often tragic. I know this point is not strictly pertinent to the motion, but it is worth mentioning. The unfortunate foster child is often bounced, as it were, from home to home and, in the process, becomes psychologically disturbed. Perhaps the foster child is one of our most serious social problems. I raise this point to throw light on the role of adoptive parents, and because I have had some experience in this field.

Hon. members will recall that about two years ago there was great excitement concerning the adoption of Vietnamese babies. It was not long before members of parliament were aware of all the excitement and commotion, for I remember distinctly three cases in my riding, in my town. I looked into these cases. What I learned was not encouraging. One family which adopted a Vietnamese baby has done well. The child has been raised as one of their own children and they are all living together as a stable, traditional family. Another family left town, hence I do not know what happened to it. But the third family worries me. This couple took a long, expensive trip to the United States, to take charge of the baby. Within a few months of the baby's arriving home, I noticed that the mother was working again. I am not sure why she is working; the family is well off. I suppose it is the usual case of the woman wanting to pursue her own career and have her own job. But it ought to make us think carefully about the whole business of adoption.

● (1730)

Inasmuch as there are responsibilities and duties in adopting—and the adoptive parent certainly deserves credit for adopting—there are also joys and benefits that come from having an adopted child, particularly if it is the only child in the family.

Along with credit for adoptive parents who, by and large, are mostly capable, wonderful people, credit should go to our chief provincial agency, the Children's Aid Society. I think everybody will agree they are doing a good job of this, whether it is the business of adoption, their involvement in homes where there is child-beating, or their numerous other responsibilities with respect to runaways, and so on. It is a remarkable organization. I think of people such as Ron Copeland and Mrs. Joan Lee in my riding, whom I have personally seen in action. I have great admiration for both of them.

In the case of adoptions, probably the most remarkable job that the Children's Aid Society has done is in matching up children with parents. We have probably all made the same mistake of saying to adoptive parents, "My goodness, your child looks just like you" and then being told, with some embarrassment, that the child is adopted, that there is no physical relationship. This is the type of work that the Children's Aid Society does, and it makes a big difference.

They have a great responsibility in making sure that the income of adoptive parents is adequate. I understand that in some cases they go so far as to require what is called a