

severe labour shortage in Alberta, particularly in Edmonton.

Only tonight I was on the telephone, talking to employers in Edmonton who assure me right now that people cannot be found to fill jobs open in Edmonton.

The combination of these events has brought us to the situation in which a government service is no longer needed. This raises the interesting question of whether or not social programs enacted by the government to fulfil a legitimate need should be changed, diminished or cancelled when the need changes; or are we stuck forever with a program which is designed to meet the need when the need itself changes?

I contend, and this was reinforced by my visit, that the unemployment insurance service for the people of Edmonton would be just as effective if provided from the central location at downtown, at a great saving. It costs \$575,000 a year to run the Strathcona office. There are 1,500 square feet in this floor and a half of storefront of unused space. There are extra board rooms which are empty of people but full of furniture. They are not being used. The seating arrangement of people working there is extremely loose, and one is under the impression that the management is trying to use all the space available.

We must also consider that the average length of time people are on UIC has dropped from 11 weeks to four and one-half weeks. This reflects the control programs UIC has implemented, as well as the great demand for labour in Edmonton and throughout my own province. I think it is wrong to maintain such expensive service when it is not needed.

Finally, let me add that I wrote to Senator Hastings, of the other place. I thought he could act as a liaison man between Alberta and the government because, as you know, there is a severe shortage on the government side of members from Alberta. I figured that if I could not impress the minister with my own representations concerning Alberta, perhaps Senator Hastings could. So, I wrote to him. I wanted to find out what Senator Hastings could do about this matter.

I challenge Senator Hastings to prove his effectiveness in carrying the Alberta message to the federal government. I challenge him to come to the UIC office and study it the way I did, and they attempt to justify its existence. I challenge him to tell the minister that, if he is smart, he will listen once in a while to what members of this House are saying, because maybe we have our finger on the pulse of Alberta.

Mr. William Rompkey (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member in his earlier question referred to the provincial Minister of Labour for Alberta as indicating that there are 40,000 jobs vacant in the forestry and construction industry. Tonight he has given some further figures to try to substantiate his claim. We feel that the earlier figure of 40,000 was not correct and that a more realistic figure would be 12,000 to 16,000. Further, this figure applies to the entire province of Alberta, and is therefore not directly representative of the area served by our Edmonton district office.

Adjournment Debate

From a viewpoint of personal service, which is supported by most members on both sides of the House, discontinuance of the Edmonton south office could prove inconvenient to a significant number of UIC claimants located in the area.

The UIC continuously reviews staff and space requirements in line with operational objectives and anticipated workloads. A recent review has not indicated any potential savings possible in the Edmonton area at this time.

The UIC has already considerably reduced operating costs by effecting a staff reduction of 70 employees in the Edmonton centre office, and 36 employees in the Edmonton south office. These staff reductions represent the difference between January, 1974, and the end of August, 1974.

The UIC review of space requirements has indicated that in total the space occupied in Edmonton meets with the workload requirement expected during the winter, and is well within Treasury Board standards to accommodate the staff levels expected. Prior to the opening of the Edmonton south office the UIC staff's union had raised a number of grievances about the inadequacy of the space available in the Edmonton centre office.

Both the minister and I share the hon. member's interest in ensuring that our UIC offices provide effective service to our claimants within reasonable cost efficiency standards. To this end the UIC will continue to review the workload and staff requirements of all our offices, including the two Edmonton offices, with the objective of maximizing the utility of both the staff and space.

I will ensure that the further facts the hon. member has presented to us this evening will be brought to the attention of the minister and his departmental officials. May I also say it is our feeling that this time of year, with winter coming, probably is not the most appropriate time to close an office. We will review the situation over the winter and possibly consider further action in the spring. I am sure Senator Hastings will be in touch with us. We will take his representations into account as well.

FINANCE—GOVERNMENT ANNUITIES—REASON FOR FAILURE TO ADJUST INTEREST RATES

Mr. Dan McKenzie (Winnipeg South Centre): Madam Speaker, when the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) is investigating cases of profiteering, might I suggest that he look into the subject of Canadian government annuities, a subject that despite its extreme seriousness, his colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner), has apparently chosen to ignore.

The minister has received countless inquiries, requests and pleas from concerned constituents and opposition members to take some action. The injustices of the annuity plan, which border on government negligence and fraud, have been publicized by responsible members of the news media.

Elderly Canadians have been misled, or perhaps swindled is appropriate, by their own government out of enjoying some form of independence and security in their retirement years. Instead of the advertised reward for their labour and thrift, they find that the monetary results