

the serious problem meanwhile in that respect is that the unemployed worker at the end of the line or in some centre, the poor worker has no income. He waits until all formalities have been complied with and his claim reaches the umpire. He sometimes manages to get some social assistance benefits, but it is quite difficult.

I showed in both instances that the umpire does not always share the opinions of the commission's officers and the members of the board of referees, following the decisions of the umpire in Quebec on November 8, 1973 and in Chandler on July 25, 1973. That did not happen in Kamouraska but it happened in other areas of the province.

I would also like to refer to what happened following a decision made by members of the board of referees in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on May 20, 1975, concerning the availability of a claimant from Kamouraska who now works in the Northwest Territories. Following a claim for benefit in due form, the employees of the commission and the members of the board of referees seemed to agree that that person was disintituled because she was previously working in an area that had great possibilities of employment and she had moved in an area where job opportunities were nearly inexistent.

Following various communications and irrefutable proof of the availability of the claimant the commission amended the decisions made previously and benefit payments were authorized for 10 weeks. However, that claimant had filled weekly reports for 22 weeks of unemployment. Something rather funny happened—but to the advantage of the claimant—the computer made payments for 22 weeks, which was followed by a claim by the commission, and in the meantime after looking that claimant found a job. As a result the commission dropped the claim.

This shows the complications of the act and the regulations that are a cause of lengthy delays when it comes to solving a benefit payment problem.

In this case, one must conclude that the rationale of the computer was more logical than that of the officials since the payment was made according to the unemployment reports submitted by the claimant. It will be noticed that I pointed out a lot of difficulties in various sectors in Canada to show the bad results of a far too complicated legislation whose purpose should be to help Canadians in general facing unemployment.

● (1450)

This does not mean that in Kamouraska we are immune from complications generated by a legislation which needs to be revised, and Bill C-69 is far from containing adequate improvements. That is why I am against it. Adoption of this legislation should be postponed and we should take time to study it along with all the difficulties contained in the act of 1971. If there are no sufficient improvements, once again the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Andras) will be obliged to write in his releases that the loopholes and the complexities of the act have not been eliminated. Bill C-69 involves amendments to the period of disqualification up to six weeks for claimants who leave their jobs voluntarily. I have referred to that point previously. I know what is going to happen because generally the commission officials listen mostly to the employer's story. If we are not there to help the applicant either go to

Unemployment Insurance Act

the board of referees or seek another solution, they make their decision according to the employer's statement. There are many reasons to fire an employee: when the employer wishes to cut back on his staff, he finds several reasons. He may wish to dismiss workers who are expecting a reasonable salary and hire new ones whom he can pay less. This practice is frequent in businesses which have trouble meeting their obligations under the present economic conditions.

Let us pause and reflect: unemployment is not only a word; for tens of thousands of families it is a daily reality; for them unemployment means: no holidays, no leisure, no new clothes, eating the same thing all week, bills piling up. That is what unemployment means. Now, I find it strange that a good many people do not seem to stop and look into the resulting difficulties.

To the government, and the newspapers, the unemployed person is a statistical datum, a percentage, an administrative problem. They talk about unemployment the same way they do about weather. It must be true, because we are about to pass a bill which has not been adequately amended. Today, many workers are in danger of becoming unemployed. The worker who had been employed for 20 or 25 years by Canadian Vickers Ltd. was not spared when that firm shut down. Like the worker who had been employed for 15 years in the shipbuilding yards in Lauzon or the worker who had been employed on the work sites of the Alcan company, he has been the victim of automation. Unemployment affects a very high percentage of Canadians. Students need work in summer time because they must help their families; in the same situation are those who have just graduated from school and who join the labour force, and do not find any job in their specialties; the worker laid off as a result of the closing of his plant; the skilled worker replaced by a machine as a result of automation; the head of the family who works 4 or 5 months out of 12 in construction; the man from 45 to 55 years of age who cannot find a job because he is too old, etc. The list would be quite long. We are told that we have a responsible government but for us under the circumstances, a responsible government is the one which is free to intervene effectively in the development and management of the economy for the common good. This cannot be unless the party in power is free from any financial limitation of private interests under the system of a truly responsible government. Political parties must at all times be completely subject to the rule of democratic control. What government can state that it is as sensitive to the appeals of the anonymous unemployed as to those of the president of such or such an industrial group?

It is not much fun to be unemployed! The unemployed often wonders who is responsible for unemployment. He knows that his former employer, the government and the politicians have something to do with it, but for the worker aged 35 or 40 who completed only Grade 7, economics and politics remain two great mysteries. He is aware of their outward manifestations, that is price increases, housing, food, taxes, finance bills to be paid, elections, the old parties, projects never completed, patronage. All that makes him sick because no one really cares about him or his problems. He sees that we live in a society where only money, profits and dollars count. However, every citizen, whoever he may be, has an absolute and basic right to