

permit them to be absorbed in another sector of the economy, these men and women have a right to ask, "What's in automation for me?"

Why should the lives of Canadian workers, whether they be in London, Ontario, in Saskatchewan, the Maritimes, B.C., Ontario or Quebec, be dislocated by what is supposed to be an economic boon and a blessing? Why should long-term employees be dismissed without adequate notice? Believe me, this is a concern of the government and, hopefully, something will be done about it. In some countries unemployment levels are very low because a deliberate and conscious effort is made to bar automation: wages are low as well. We in Canada know that in order to remain competitive in today's world, efficiency is required and the latest technological techniques. But all of us fail, whether we are in government, labour, management or the professions, if we cannot resolve the challenge of distributing the undoubted benefits which automation brings. This is the challenge with which we are faced.

• (9:30 p.m.)

If we believe Canada is a land of opportunity, then there must be opportunity for a job and the income that goes with it. And if in our pursuit for more sophisticated technology all the Canadian work force, excluding the unavoidable 2½ or 3 per cent, cannot be absorbed into the economy, we must remove the economic penalties and the social stigma associated with this unemployment, and it has to be done now. Mr. Speaker, the good ideas which have been advanced from the various sectors of this House should be considered seriously by the government and studied by members of the civil service, and if they are good ideas let us not be partisan. Let us adopt them if they are good.

Now I want to say a word about the Unemployment Insurance Commission. I know that some members are receiving complaints about late cheques. May I say to hon. members, and through them to their constituents, that if there are delays in receiving UIC cheques, or other problems with the UIC, these problems should be referred immediately to the minister's office and the best possible service will be provided to expedite matters. I have looked into the situation so far as many claims are concerned and I am able to give the House this information: In spite of the high volume of claims, over 79 per cent are now ready for payment in the second week and claims, of course are payable after three weeks. Benefits are payable after three weeks. Some 96 per cent are ready for payment or are paid in the third week.

Understandably, Unemployment Insurance offices across the country are having a very difficult time. Their staffs are to be commended for the work they are doing in meeting a very heavy workload. But I say to hon. members that wherever you sit in this House, you and your constituents have a right to good service from the department and from the UIC. If there are allegations of delays for no good reason, you should contact the minister's office immediately—yes, contact me. Each case will be investigated. It is difficult enough to be unemployed,

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let alone to be one of those in the small group unable to secure benefits because of one problem or another.

There are three main reasons for delay. One is that the employer has failed to submit a record of contributions which he is obliged to make on behalf of his employees. We undertook over 160 prosecutions last year alone against employers for this offence. The second reason is that the employee may have filed an incorrect claim and some mistake has been made. I point out that service offices and information offices are now being established in some constituencies. To hon. members I say that if they believe the volume of claims in their areas requires this kind of office, I hope they will let the department know immediately. The third reason is that clerical mistakes may have occurred. All sorts of things could have happened.

I also want to point out, Mr. Speaker—I think hon. members are aware of this—that very soon changes will be proposed in the House with respect to unemployment insurance—

**Mr. Woolliams:** Let us get on with them now.

**Mr. Perrault:** Certain members of the opposition were most helpful to the government in framing some sections of the labour committee's report on unemployment insurance. They should be commended for this. I confidently believe that after the legislation comes before the House, Canada undoubtedly will have the finest unemployment insurance system in the entire world, designed not only to cope with the contingency of an interruption in earnings resulting from unemployment but a plan to assist those unemployed because of illness, to assist working wives who are unable to work because of pregnancy—a plan not only to cope with unemployment but one which will see the UIC working with other agencies engaged in social development. There will be co-operation with manpower programs. There will be co-operation with provincial and municipal bodies. It will be a plan concerned with helping those who have lost a job to become re-employed as quickly as possible. It will be a plan which will allow benefit rates and contributions to adjust automatically to fluctuations in employment and changes in average earnings.

In addition to a more flexible and responsive benefit structure, the government proposes to assist the unemployed worker more effectively by providing a claimant assistance program. I know that hon. members who have asked for increased assistance for the unemployed will not in any way impede this program and that we will receive their co-operation when the new legislation comes before the House.

In conclusion, I want to take issue with some remarks made by the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) last night, which were printed in the newspapers today. These were some of the words that he used to describe the alleged attitude of the government, "unnecessary, indefensible, disastrous, cruel, heartless, inhumane, smug, complacent, arrogant," and so on.

**Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Read on.