

Unemployment Assistance

the third week in March. But for most provinces, somewhere between February and March you would find the peak of unemployment. It would be interesting to have those figures.

I would think the minister would say that anybody left on the relief rolls in June or July would be definitely the hard core of persons seeking public assistance. They are probably the people who are never off the relief rolls of the province. I doubt very much if any province actually has a hard core of more than .45 per cent of its population.

Mr. Martin: You mean normally?

Mrs. Fairclough: Yes.

Mr. Martin: That is right, and I think my hon. friend will agree we hope it stays that way.

Mrs. Fairclough: Yes, very definitely; but it changes the whole picture which the minister has given this house when he says that now, under this legislation, the federal government is invading a field that had never been envisaged by the 1945 proposals. He says they are going farther than they intended to go in 1945, but that is not true and for this reason. If the hard core which is always there does not in any case exceed .45 per cent—in any event the province has always paid for them—and in the 1945 proposals it was agreed that the province would still care for the unemployables and that the only ones who would be considered by the federal authorities were the unemployed employables, then actually that is what is proposed under this bill.

But even so, even in extending assistance to the provinces to take care of the unemployed employables this legislation still leaves that hard core of .45 per cent which, as I say, may be actually, as it is in the case of Ontario more than their ordinary welfare assistance, so it still leaves that in provincial hands, paid for by the province. Until the province goes over the .45 per cent the federal government does not participate at all, and then only to the extent of 50 per cent of what is left over and above .45 per cent. If the normal hard core of ordinary relief assistance is less than .45 per cent, then under this agreement the province actually assumes something it did not assume before.

I do not say the province did not pay it. The province has done so and has taken care of some of these people, but it had no actual legal responsibility to them, and many provinces have refused to acknowledge it. Now under this agreement they must acknowledge their responsibility up to that basic figure.

[Mrs. Fairclough.]

Then the government comes along and offers them 50 per cent of the amount expended over and above that figure, but the government is not paying 50 per cent of their cost of assistance. The province is paying 50 per cent of the cost over and above the figure that has been set, and in addition the administrative costs for those additional people.

I want to say something later on about administration costs, but at this point I should like to make it clear that I think the minister erred when he said the federal government, through this legislation, goes farther than had been proposed in 1945. I think a very good case could be made for that because, as I have said, that basis is a basis which, on the minister's own admission, is higher in most instances than the actual hard core of persons receiving indigent relief of one sort or another. Then, of course, the dominion does not participate until you go over that figure.

Mr. Churchill: If the minister is not going to reply, can we carry this a step farther? Somewhat earlier I asked the minister if he could give us the figures by provinces represented by this magic number, .45 per cent. He did not have the information; yet when the hon. member for Hamilton West mentioned Ontario and the figure of 23,323 the minister promptly said that was the basic figure for Ontario. Well, if he has such a ready reply with regard to that province, can he not tell us what it is for the other provinces? This information put down now in the official record would be very helpful to anybody who is studying this matter.

Mr. Martin: I cannot give my hon. friend the figures for all the provinces. I remember the figure of 23,000 because I had been discussing and concluding this matter with the province of Ontario, as I indicated, just a few days ago. Those figures are there. Some of the provinces do not have a reporting system that justifies the acceptance of certain figures they present. We are waiting for their claims.

Mr. Churchill: Did the provinces, in correspondence with the minister concerning agreements that might or might not be signed, not have to indicate the situation with regard to unemployment in their provinces?

Mr. Martin: We are waiting for them now in four of the agreements.

Mr. Churchill: What about the six?

Mr. Martin: In the case of two we have those figures. I have given them for Newfoundland and British Columbia.

Mr. Churchill: Do the other four provinces not have them also?