

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

This is done as the work load diminishes, which is normal 25 years after the war, and requests for loans under the VLA diminish. In the country as a whole the VLA staff has been reduced this year from 570 to 514, a reduction of 56 positions. This reduction of 56 is broken down to 24 from the field officers and 32 from the office staffs. Out of the 56 positions, 32 became vacant as a result of attrition due to retirement, sickness or death, and 8 were transferred. This leaves a balance of 16. Not one of these 16 people lost his employment. We hope to be able to find positions for all 16. But I believe it is only good management to effect staff reductions and to increase efficiency.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE—COMMISSION
ADVERTISEMENTS RESPECTING FRAUD

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, on January 28 I asked the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) whether he had seen and approved the advertisements which have been appearing on behalf of the Unemployment Insurance Commission warning about alleged fraud in the collection of unemployment insurance claims and threatening the supposed defrauders with court action. I was amazed—that is why I put the question for debate at ten o'clock—at the reply which I received from the minister. This is the kind of reply I would have expected had I directed such a question to the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) who was born with a silver spoon in his mouth and I believe never really understood how ordinary working people live. However, I was amazed to receive such a reply from the Minister of Labour, who in my opinion is one of the few good ministers in this government. For the minister to have taken the hard line which he took and to have almost suggested that by asking the question I was condoning the defrauding of the fund, amazed me.

I give credit where credit is due, and I would say that the advertisement to which I referred was brought to my attention by a column written by Mr. Dalton Camp which appeared in the *Toronto Telegram* and in the *Montreal Star* of Wednesday, January 21, 1970. There is a picture of a judge, or of what is supposed to be a judge—and if ever there were a hanging judge, he is in that picture. Let me summarize the main points of the advertisement as Mr. Camp summarized them:

"When someone knowingly cheats (a case had been made earlier for people who cheated unknowingly) they're stealing money—

[Mr. Dubé.]

"We think that should be enough to make anyone think twice before trying to cheat on their unemployment insurance.

"But if it isn't, we know something that is.

"A day in court."

And so on, and so on, Mr. Speaker, ad nauseam. I hold no brief for people who cheat the fund, but a deliberate campaign has been worked out by the Unemployment Insurance Commission or, more likely, by some hot-shot Liberal hack advertising agency which they hire—of which this ad is just one example—which would make people think that there is a fantastic amount of cheating going on. In another publication of the commission they say as follows:

There are close to one and a half million claims for unemployment insurance in Canada each year. Almost 20 per cent of them have an element of suspected fraud.

That would mean that 300,000 people are deliberately defrauding the commission. Mr. Speaker, there is no evidence of that. The commission has never done any investigation, except in regard to a few small samples. If it were parliamentary to say so, I would say that either the officials of the commission or the advertising agency which probably devised this brilliant campaign deliberately lied and misrepresented the facts when they made that claim. There is no evidence of that.

I am not saying there is no defrauding of the fund. I am not saying that the commission does not have to take adequate steps. But I am saying that this kind of scare campaign is unnecessary, is despicable, and I am amazed that it takes place under the aegis of the kind of minister we have. According to figures submitted by the commission itself, in the fiscal year 1968-69 they were able to recover \$3 million in unemployment insurance—not frauds but overpayments, which is something entirely different. To do that, Mr. Speaker, they spent \$2½ million. They had 160 to 181 people working to do that. I submit that the commission's own figures show that the advertising campaign is a fraud; that it is built up on misapprehensions, on faulty information; that the returns are very limited and do not warrant the kind of campaign which is being carried on.

I say it is an insult to the people who are unemployed. I would say the vast majority, 98 per cent of those who are not working are not working because there is no work. They would be more than happy to go back to work, and they do go back to work when work is available. The commission ought not to carry on the campaign which it is carrying