

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

Centre (Mr. Knowles) on behalf of my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport (Mr. Duquet) who is unable to be here tonight.

All hon. members are aware of the continuing efforts that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has made and is making, as well as the work of the Standing Committee on Transport and Communications, to bring about changes which would better the position of Canadian National pensioners. Members of all political parties in this House have over the past number of years made very strong representations to the Minister of Transport on behalf of these pensioners. I have a volume of correspondence in my own files on this subject. I also have a number of CN pensioners in my constituency and I, along with other hon. members of the House, have made strong representations to the minister and they have been passed on to the CNR.

• (2220)

Some progress has been achieved as a result of these efforts. The Minister of Transport (Mr. Jamieson) made a statement about a year ago at this time of year and informed the House of certain major contributions made by CNR in this respect. The statement made approximately one year ago covered a wide range of CNR pensioners, their widows and survivors. The measures which were announced implemented most of the recommendations of the standing committee's report.

I agree, however, that there is need for further consideration on the part of CNR. Certainly there is no lack of sympathy on my part and on the part of the minister. If we cannot budge the CNR except by some form of legislation, I hope that some day the minister will consider that as a final resort. I am speaking as an individual Member of Parliament in that regard and not for the minister.

The minister has assured me, as he has assured the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, that he is making the strongest representations to the CNR and he has asked me, in my capacity as speaking for his parliamentary secretary, to inform the hon. member that he is continuing his discussions with the CNR and that he will give every possible consideration to the representations which the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre made to him on February 29 and on March 10.

*[Translation]*

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE—DELAY IN PAYMENT OF BENEFITS—POSSIBLE DECENTRALIZATION OF SERVICES FROM MONTREAL

**Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, on March 7, I put the following question to the Prime Minister:

Since this situation is becoming increasingly worse because a great number of unemployed must wait five, six or even ten weeks, especially in Quebec, before drawing their first cheque of unemployment insurance benefits, can the Prime Minister tell us whether his government intends to improve those conditions in the very near future?

And the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of manpower and Immigration (Mr. Perrault) who was answering for the Unemployment Insurance Commission, stated, and I quote:

[Mr. Watson.]

If there are cases of what is alleged to be an inordinate delay these will be investigated immediately,—

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Manpower and Immigration has misled the House by his preposterous comments.

Since January I am swamped by a flow of unemployment insurance cases. I am aware that this new legislation was very poorly explained to the public. I understand, and the Parliamentary Secretary should understand it also, that this is not the proper time to make inquiries to see what is wrong. It is time rather to seek a settlement of this most unfortunate situation.

In my view, there are three main reasons for those delays. Everywhere, on television, on radio and in newspapers, everyone was told: You will receive weekly unemployment insurance benefits of \$100 the new plan is completely improved, the government is going modern, it is thinking of you, and other things along those lines.

Such announcements put the people to sleep, and when they wake up they realize that they have had a bad dream.

I would now like to call the attention of the House to a telegram that I received from the provincial member of the constituency of Wolfe, on March 15, 1972, and I quote:

My Dear Léonel:

Re: Raymond Béliveau Stratford

Received nothing for 16 weeks STOP Henri Poulin Garthby. Mr. Poulin stopped work in early December and has not received anything since last week STOP Family man, children, great hardship, brought before the court for non-payment of bills . . .

Those are but a few of the numerous cases that exist in the riding, people who should receive unemployment benefits STOP I tried to help them by making representations on behalf of these people but to no avail STOP I hope that you may be able to see to it that the fine talk about unemployment benefits one hears on television is implemented so that these people will receive what they are entitled to. Thank you for your co-operation.

René Lavoie, member for Wolfe

Similar cases, Mr. Speaker, around Sherbrooke are a common occurrence, they come up every day, even three, four, five and even ten times a day.

The answer that thousands of unemployed receive when cheques are delayed indefinitely, is this: Sir, we are waiting to hear from Montreal. Sir, your file has been lost. Sir, we have mislaid your file. Sir, we think you are not entitled to unemployment benefits.

Mr. Speaker, I should like the hon. parliamentary secretary to the Minister to tell us if that is what those people will use to buy food, fuel oil and survive this winter.

It is a great pity that the unemployed do not receive their benefits and have to go to welfare offices to beg for their pittance in order to survive, because that is too complicated in Montreal and machines are not doing the required work, etc.

Mr. Speaker, on Thursday March 16 I asked the minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Mackasey) the following question:

A few days ago, in the minister's absence, due to circumstances beyond his control I am sure, I pointed out to his parliamentary secretary that a very difficult situation had developed in the Unemployment Insurance regional office in Sherbrooke, namely that the number of employees had been increased by about 25 or 30 per cent on the same premises, and that service to the unem-