

given the privilege they once had of opting out of the program. This would apply only to seasonal agricultural workers. They would have the choice either of coming under the plan or not. They did not want to come under it. They object to having deductions made from wages during the harvest season, which they consider to be found money. Many of them do not need the work too badly in the first place. The employers, largely farmers, detest the bookkeeping involved and if my request were adopted it would remove one of the great headaches that now plague the officers of the Unemployment Insurance Commission. I think this is a reasonable suggestion to make and I hope the parliamentary secretary—I am happy he is here and is paying attention—will take it to the minister, because I believe this could be done through regulation and without a major amendment to the act.

I now wish to refer to the other portion of the problem in my area, which relates to language among the ethnic groups. I refer to pages 8 and 9 of the interim report of the advisory committee on unemployment insurance. On those pages we have the findings of the benefit control officers. By and large they are given a clean bill of health. It is said that they are not harassing individuals interviewed and they try to be as helpful as possible. However, many of these people do not understand English. They do not understand the import of what is being asked. They do not understand the report or statement when it is read back to them.

I would suggest to the parliamentary secretary, and through him to the minister, that a claimant when being interviewed have the privilege of an agent to represent him, either to translate for him or to interpret the meaning of what is being asked and the statement he is making. Benefit control officers by and large try to be straightforward. I do not think they intimidate the people. However, their interrogation procedures are a little questionable. Sometimes the people are asked whether they have a babysitter in a home where the wife is a worker. The wife says that she has not. Obviously, she has not when she is not working. The report goes into the insurance officer stating that there is no child care arrangement, and she is therefore disqualified on the ground that she is not available for work.

A similar situation occurs when they ask whether or not a person has a car for transportation. The person concerned may not have a car now, but if work is available can obtain transportation. However, the person is not asked that type of question. The insurance officer who makes the decision is not the person who carries on the interview. All he sees is a sentence in the statement saying, "No child care arrangement". I do not think this is quite fair or above board. I think this problem could be cleared up if there were an agent with the claimant to advise and to translate for him.

Then on top of that, these people have the fear of many immigrants from iron curtain countries when a government agent comes into their home. They are petrified. They will say anything. They will answer anything and will sign anything in order to get the man out of the house. Then after talking to their neighbours they have a very grave doubts about what was said and done, but it is too

### *Adjournment Debate*

late. Along comes the yellow slip from the Unemployment Insurance Commission stating that they are disqualified.

I wish to make one final point. In our area there are a great many people who are financially independent. They have no need of unemployment insurance or seasonal employment. They see their neighbours drawing unemployment insurance benefits because they are unemployed. This is not right. The public sees this and it creates a bad image for the Unemployment Insurance Commission and what it stands for. In order to weed out these people I think there would almost have to be a means test. I do not know whether that is practical; I will leave that to the parliamentary secretary, the minister and his officials to decide. It seems to me it could be done by regulation and that it would be very easy for a benefit control officer to decide whether a person was entitled to benefit. There is more I could say but I have used up my time. I appreciate having had the opportunity to state my case, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Mark MacGuigan (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Manpower and Immigration):** Mr. Speaker, the Unemployment Insurance Commission does not have any program designed to deliberately and specifically disentitle any claimants. However, the commission does make investigations where there are indications that job vacancies do exist in the same or allied areas.

The situation with regard to the hon. member's constituency is that a number of seasonal agricultural workers have been interviewed since January 2 of this year. These persons were mainly employed in the tobacco industry where work is of a seasonal and unskilled nature. Labour force information indicated that job vacancies were available in the area and resulted in the commission's investigations. In other words, from our viewpoint we are not doing anything different with respect to unemployment insurance in the hon. member's constituency than we are in any other. If I understood his submissions, they were in effect that we should do some things differently in his constituency.

With respect to the language problem that the hon. member posed, I am fully in agreement with him. In all parts of the country, where it knows in advance that there are sizeable numbers of people who speak languages other than English or French the commission makes a serious attempt to have there officials who speak those languages, to enable the interviews to be conducted properly. I think this matter should be investigated with respect to the constituency of Norfolk-Haldimand to see if such language fluency is available to UIC officials there.

The other point the hon. member raises, to change the legislation so that these agricultural workers would not be included within the purview of the act, is a more difficult one. I will bring it to the attention of the minister, but I am sure the hon. member realizes that the intention of parliament was to include all people who were employed, and to make any exception might lead to difficulties because it could lead to claims for exemption by other groups. However, this matter will also be reported to the minister and to the commission.