

Unemployment Insurance Act

Revenue Fund would consequently be increased. Therefore, in my view, any such Bill would be a "money Bill" which must be introduced by a Minister of the Crown and accompanied by the recommendation of the Governor General. However, since the Chair does not want to take too much of Private Members' time to rule now, I intend to allow the debate to take place on this Bill until such debate comes to an end, and then I will rule on the acceptability of the Bill.

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UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE BENEFITS TO ADOPTING PARENT**

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West) moved that Bill C-405, An Act to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971, (benefits to adopting parents), be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration.

He said: Mr. Speaker, if I should be lucky enough to get to the point where you have to rule on the admissibility, or inadmissibility of the Bill, I will want to present an argument as to why it is admissible. In the meantime, may I say that the use of the term "parent" in this Bill is intentional. For too long our society has thought of the parenting function as the duty of women alone and has not included responsibility of fathers to their children. This Bill accepts that co-equal responsibility at the outset.

This Bill is not specifically about fathers or mothers, but about the arrival of children in new homes as a result of adoption. Some provisions are already in place to assist natural mothers with the arrival of their children. In our view, they are certainly not adequate or all-encompassing. Canadian maternity benefits, compared with those in Sweden, France, Italy and Israel are stingy. When you can take two years' leave with pay in other countries, the 15 weeks in Canada seems somewhat inadequate. This Bill would extend to adoptive parents the benefits that apply to natural parents. There are excellent reasons why it should be enacted.

In many provincial jurisdictions, adoptive parents are required to spend time at home with their new child. This is necessary for the health and development of these children. The time for settling in ranges from a few weeks to several months. It can be required by either provincial Act or regulation of a sponsoring agency. The number of families which can have only one wage earner and numerous other factors has led to today's situation where few families can afford, and as a result may not wish, to have someone adopted into their home.

Unemployment keeps a lot of people at home, but that would not qualify them for adoption. Someone must take time off from their employment to be with an adopted child. This is a significant disincentive to potential adoptive parents. Why should that be so? If the Government and Parliament can do this for natural parents, it is equally as important for adoptive parents, particularly when it concerns young children. This Bill

will redress this injustice by giving adoptive parents the same leave provisions as natural parents.

Second, but no less important, for the most part the person taking time off work would be the woman, the person who faced the most difficulty getting a job in the first place. This is all the more so if it is a good job. Without the provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Act extended to them, adoptive parents would have no right to return to their former place of employment, as does a natural parent. Surely that is another disincentive to becoming an adoptive parent.

This Bill attempts to provide the same privileges for those, who, bless their hearts, adopt a child, newborn to teenage, into their homes. Some time should be spent by one or both adoptive parents with the child. All we ask is that the 8 or 15 weeks be provided, as is the case with natural parents.

I have good reason to believe that Members from all Parties agree with this Bill. I am not wedded to my Bill being passed, whether or not it is in order. If the House is agreed, the subject matter of the Bill could be referred to the appropriate standing committee, particularly if the Chair rules that it is not in order. The subject matter could then be considered by an appropriate committee and incorporated into legislation. The Government can have all the credit, as far as I am concerned.

This measure is long overdue. This Bill has been placed on the Order Paper either by myself or by a former colleague for a number of years. I hope that today the House will agree to deal with the Bill. If Your Honour disputes its eligibility, I wish to make a number of arguments in favour of its being an appropriate Bill. Failing that, having the subject matter referred to the appropriate committee would be a small step toward implementing a necessary piece of social legislation under the Unemployment Insurance Act.

● (1730)

Mr. Gary F. McCauley (Moncton): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest to the remarks of the Hon. Member for Regina West (Mr. Benjamin). I commend him for his initiative in bringing this Bill forward. I have two immediate reactions to his suggestion that Unemployment Insurance benefits should be extended to adoptive parents.

The first is that this is not a new subject; it has been considered on many occasions over the last ten years. The second reaction which I should like to emphasize is that adoptive parents certainly deserve consideration in the special problems they face.

What is the most appropriate means of dealing with what appears to be a legitimate social concern? A proposal to extend Unemployment Insurance benefits to adoptive parents should not be dismissed lightly. We have to see how adoptive parents and natural parents differ under the Unemployment Insurance Act, and then decide how Unemployment Insurance can assist both groups. The adoptive parent plays an absolutely essential role in our society and the adoption process brings the joys of parenthood into many lives.