

Unemployment Insurance Act

member may not be involved in this in his area because his constituents in Mississauga have cars and can drive a short distance down to the unemployment insurance office and make the appeal themselves. They can speak to the people in the office.

In my area, or in the minister's area, sometimes these people must drive 300 or 400 miles. Then when they get there, quite often they do not know what to say because the hearing is similar to a court hearing and they have not had any experience with courts. They do not know how to present their case. I deal mainly with the officials. I find that if they are given the information, they check it out and then make the decision. There is no need to go to the tribunal. My experience is that if they do not make the change on the information I have given them, then the tribunal will not make the change either, because it would be making the decision on the same information the officials had. I am pleased to give that explanation to the hon. member for Mississauga.

An hon. Member: "Mississauga."

Mr. Peters: I come from an area where we pronounce Indian names in the Indian fashion. We have not totally Canadianized them. It seems to me that the penalty being paid is a sizeable penalty with the three weeks. The point I started out to make is that I have not had any experience that would indicate to me there is a discretionary power in respect of the one week and the three weeks. Perhaps there is. Perhaps sometimes that is a fact, but I do not know of any case of disqualification where the person was told that for such and such an infraction he was disqualified under such and such a section of the act. I do not remember ever seeing two weeks or one week mentioned. Perhaps the hon. member for Nickel Belt, who has seen all the documentation on adjudications, may have seen such cases, but I have not. We are really talking about three weeks and six weeks, not about a period between one week and three weeks or one week and six weeks. We are talking about the maximum disqualification which to my knowledge has always applied. I have not seen any discretionary powers used in these cases.

● (1640)

Mr. Andras: The average has been 1.7 weeks.

Mr. Peters: I have never yet seen a letter stating that a disqualification was for less than three weeks. In most cases the two sections were included so that the total amount applied. Perhaps more problems occur in my area than in any other area, but I do not think so. I think the information with which the minister has been provided could be separated into two parts: the urban operation of UIC and the pseudo-rural operation which occurs in both our areas.

Mr. Andras: I thought you would say the information was either right or wrong.

Mr. Peters: Honestly, I have never seen a disqualification for less than the maximum time, and it comes in a form letter typed on an electric typewriter on which perhaps you can push a key telling you the disqualification time. I think these disqualifications are unfair and that in

[Mr. Peters.]

the case of a person moving from one job to another reasons can be given for disqualifying him. It has been my experience with one of the UIC offices that if a person is moved to another location, say a husband is transferred from one region to another in his job and his wife has to follow him, she has to terminate her employment, a move which is considered as quitting for no just cause and the three-week disqualification is applied in her case.

We have argued these cases on a number of occasions and we won them but, as I have said, almost automatically the three-week disqualification is applied, which is then questioned, under some circumstances with successful results. Usually, officials at UIC are shocked when they are told they are helping to break up families and that their decisions lead to social disruption in the community when wife and husband are separated. Normally they agree that the husband has precedence—I suppose this does not fit in with women's lib—and if the wife follows the husband for the sake of maintaining the family as a unit, she should not be disqualified for having left her job without just reason. In almost every case I have had coming from one UIC office they are automatically disqualified for three weeks every time that type of circumstance arises.

We are not really facing the major problem. There are people who move into areas where there is no work for them, work for which they are trained. In my opinion, they do so to get out of the labour force and be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits in the new location. In my opinion, such people should be prosecuted because somewhere along the line they must have made dishonest statements as to whether or not they were looking for work which would normally be available in the area to which they were going. These are the cases which benefit control almost always picks out. Most people who are involved in the UIC day to day operations would agree that the abuses which are taking place should be stopped and that certainly something should be done to stop the fraud that sometimes takes place.

I should like to say a few words about the provision which would make the sponsors of LIP and LEAP projects eligible for benefits. I am reminded of one of the municipalities in my riding which decided to provide eight weeks work for all the unemployables in the area. If they got the work, they would not be drawing welfare from the municipality, and at the end of the work they would be eligible for unemployment insurance, which would take care of probably half the welfare they were getting previously. I consider that to be fraud also. It is dishonest and surely those people know it. That practice should be discontinued.

I may be wrong, but perhaps these cases in my area are treated differently from similar cases in other areas. But I doubt it, because if they move me any farther after the next election I will be dealing with some people who are now in the minister's area. My friend suggests that I should discuss this with the UIC officials. We have had considerable success in dealing with them. I have found them to be very reasonable, but they must operate within the act, and what we are doing now is changing the act. In changing the act we are not allowing them to use their judgment; we are making certain things mandatory.