

help claimants in a meaningful way. Naturally, I am talking of legitimate claimants. Advance pay would help them. But they also need help with their claims.

That brings me to my other point. There is no claims assistance service in the Sudbury office. It is strictly a factory operation, with people coming in, making an application, being referred to a claims officer and going through the usual procedures. But there is no claims assistance procedure in the office. The unemployment insurance office is in the suburbs and the Canada Manpower centre is downtown. There is no bus service between the two. Indeed, the unemployment insurance office is located on a busy thoroughfare. What happens? A man is laid off. Here, in one part of town, is the office which is supposed to help him find a job, help him make his application and see that he is presentable for an interview. The UIC office is on the outskirts of the city, miles away. And, as I have said, there is no claims assistance service in Sudbury; merely a factory-type operation.

● (1730)

Surely if we wish to make this program work we ought to offer proper counselling and help the unemployed person find a job, not necessarily in his own area but anywhere across Canada. If the rationale for this kind of payment was sound in the past, it is as sound today as it was then. It is probably more needed today. The step proposed is a retrograde one. The minister told us he had tried an experiment. As far as I am concerned the department never experimented much in my community. I never heard of anyone benefiting from it. It is difficult enough for people to get the pay the UIC owes them after they have been unemployed for six weeks.

The hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) pointed out that no one gets paid in less than six weeks. Since he made that statement everyone has been coming to his door trying to prove to him that it is not six weeks but four. Even four weeks is a very long time for a person earning \$6,000 a year to wait before receiving the payments which are due to him under programs to which he has contributed.

It is easy for people who earn between \$26,000 and \$30,000 a year, and for those who legislate and earn \$34,000, to embark upon programs of restraint and say, "We will drop this group, or that group." There is something very odd about people earning salaries which are among the highest in the country deciding that a \$6,000 a year person should not be entitled to a three week advance pay if he is in financial difficulties, or to assistance in finding work.

The nabobs of the Unemployment Insurance Commission who sit up there in the gallery and feed information to the minister, and give advice, most of it bad, think of the unemployed person as a statistic, not as a human being who must find a job and support a family. Many of them have never worked out in the working world with their hands. Many of them went straight from university to jobs in the administration. All the bumboys of the administration end up in the bureaucracy. These are the people who are saying to constituents of mine that they shall no longer enjoy certain benefits.

Unemployment Insurance Act

What wonderful workers we have in this country, Mr. Speaker. What incentive do they have to work for \$6,000 a year with the cost of living as high as it is now? We are very fortunate to have workers of this kind, because certainly they have nothing to look forward to, and in many cases unemployment is not a matter of choice. It comes without being sought. Lo and behold, these are the persons who go to the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

The UIC should not be content simply to pay out benefits. It should be asking the question: how can we get these people back to work? The Commission should ascertain what skills these people have and offer them a program of assistance. This would be of more value than having them make an application, processing that application, and then sending the benefit control boys after the poor claimant. As it is, when a file has been processed they proceed to the next aspect; the leashes are untied, and there go the benefit control boys. I am sure they go to work to see how many disqualifications they can come up with in a day. I am sure they must work on a quota system; they must select groups for special attention by the control officers.

We are told from time to time in committee that the UIC has adopted a new approach—helping the claimant out of the maze. That was the fantastic sign I saw in an Unemployment Insurance Commission office. It said, "Let us help you out of the maze". Well, Mr. Speaker, I suspect claimants were deeper into the maze when they left that office than when they entered it, given the kind of program we have. Then they start on this kind of—

An hon. Member: Vendetta?

Mr. Rodriguez: Vendetta, if you wish to call it that. The minister has referred to it as part of the restraint program. As I said before, if the government is really interested in restraint, let it not pick this group of people as the first victims.

If we were really interested in saving money we could save a million dollars right off the bat by cancelling the increase in the wages of members and Senators which is due to come into effect in January.

The hon. member for Hamilton West talked about removing what he called disincentives. I do not think the little fellow at the bottom is exposed to any disincentives if we give him three weeks advance pay. Indeed this is likely to be one of the best ways of diverting money from the federal government to those in the low income sector. It might be the most efficient way of doing it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner (London East)): Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rodriguez: You will hear it all again.

An hon. Member: I didn't listen the first time.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I was persuaded to enter this debate by the remarks made by the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander).

An hon. Member: We will get him to withdraw.