

Unemployment Insurance Act

Like other Members in this House, I too have received representations from my constituents on the subject. At first blush, it seems that fair is fair, that if we do it in one instance, why not another? Over time there are other instances that seem to be simple and clear-cut. However, when you examine them closely, they presents all kinds of problems.

Let me begin with the suggestion that it may be more appropriate for us to get into this legislation after the Department completes its studies.

Mr. Taylor: Why?

Mr. Masters: The Member opposite asks why. We are dealing with a matter in respect of which we have an Act that is designed to deliver protection to people who lose the benefit of jobs, whether through being dismissed, a plant shutdown or a period of natural pregnancy and birth. There is a physical reality that has to be addressed during that period and we have to take certain measures with regard to it.

We then get into another principle, if I can have the indulgence of the House to philosophize for a moment. While any proposals of this nature may be tiresome and take a long time to resolve, they must be the subject of thoughtful deliberation and much consultation. I believe the debate this afternoon adds to that.

We can all recall the time when people who could not work because of illness were not paid. If they were ill, that was too bad. In many instances people were not paid anything unless their employer was particularly benevolent or they were the sons or daughters of the owner.

There evolved a conscientious and great social system in which a period was allowed for sickness. The original intent was that people who were ill would be protected by others; the plant owners, and fellow workers who had to pick up the slack. Therefore, these people would not be out of pocket. After all, it is not the individuals fault that he is sick. There really were extenuating circumstances.

After a while, the notion seemed to creep into the system that if Charlie Brown had a week's sick time this year, whether or not I need sick time I should be given a week's sick leave, or at least have the benefit. There was a drastic change in the setup. It started out as a conscientious effort to be fair to people who under certain circumstances were not able to perform their work for a period of time.

We now come to the proposed legislation before us today. It is a kindred matter. We have recognized the need to assist many women who cannot work for a period of time during a natural pregnancy and after delivery. The legislative measure place is the Unemployment Insurance Act. It might perhaps have been designed in another fashion, but I think there is some justification for it. I do not quarrel with it.

● (1825)

My colleague mentioned the delivery system for social programs and I wonder about that when dealing with an insurance-type program. We have now a dilemma in that

people adopting children say they experience the same kinds of things as the natural parents. They are not exactly the same things. I do not think we can have universality in the way we deliver services to the people of Canada. It would be nice if we could afford it, and that is the other difficulty I have with this piece of legislation—

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In most Provinces a parent who adopts a child is required by law to stay home for six months, so that parent loses his or her job. Why are the Liberals making so many excuses? If they do not want to pass the Bill why do they not say so instead of being so hypocritical.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): That may be an interesting contribution to the debate but it is not a point of order.

Mr. Masters: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member asks whether we have been sincere. I do not think we want to impute different motives to different people. I am talking the Bill out, that is true. That is an honest statement. But that does not indicate that the Government is not interested in the subject matter.

I was trying to make the point that a problem of timing is involved. We are already being hit on all sides with difficulties under the UIC Act and are not able to deliver everything to people who require it. I believe that in the course of time we have to address these matters with great care and deliberation. There are many problems in our society that have been around longer than many of us would care to admit, but all things come about in due time.

I come back to the idea that the Hon. Member has done the House, the people of Canada and adoptive parents, a service by bringing forward legislation that underlines the sense of urgency which exists in many quarters to have something done in this area. That is worthwhile. What we say in this House has some significance in the process, otherwise we might as well stay in our ridings. This Bill should convey a sense of urgency to the responsible officials to deal with the matter with move vigour and enthusiasm.

The Hon. Member opposite reminded me of some of the technicalities of the adoption process and the law in most Provinces. We appreciate these facts, but we have to ask if we can come up with the money to do the things we would like to do, desirable as they may be, or whether we further weaken a system that is already weakened by further demands on it.

I find nothing wrong with the Government saying that it likes the idea, and that there is a need in many instances for the adoptive parents to be given due consideration, along with natural parents. I should like to see that happen, but this involves time for proper and thorough deliberation. The Member of the Official Opposition condemns the Government for taking precipitous action in other areas. He joins his colleagues in saying that there has not been enough discussion about this, that or the other thing, that there is not enough listening, yet when one tries to make the point that we have to examine the matter more thoroughly—