

I encourage my colleagues to support this effort as well.

THE SACRED HEART CATHOLIC
CHURCH CELEBRATES 100 YEARS
IN BLUEFIELD

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 7, 1995

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, 1995 is a memorable year for the residents of Bluefield, WV. For it was 100 years ago that the Sacred Heart Catholic Church was dedicated on Mercer Street. The theme of this years celebration is "Remember, Rejoice, and Renew."

Late in the 19th century, the coal industry, the railroad, and commercial trade brought numerous Catholics to southeastern West Virginia. The first Catholic service in Bluefield took place on Princeton Avenue, when the Reverend John McBride came on horseback from Wytheville, VA, to perform the ceremony. Mr. Speaker, the first Catholic service in Bluefield even predated the incorporation of the city of Bluefield, WV.

Five years later, in 1984, the Most Reverend P.D. Donahue, Bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling, WV, appointed the Reverend Emile Olivier the pastor of the growing Catholic community in Bluefield. Through Reverend Olivier's tutelage and the hard work of the parish, the Sacred Heart Church was dedicated on Mercer Street in Bluefield on October 27, 1895. The church continued to grow and was responsible for the creation of other Catholic communities in Powhatan, Gary, Welch, Williamson, Princeton, and Our Lady of Lourdes in Bluefield.

Mr. Speaker, the Sacred Heart Church in 1995, as in 1895, is a family of Christians whose mission it is to bring about the Kingdom of God on Earth by their worship, evangelization, and strengthening of relationships and service to church and community. It is with great honor that I help to honor the centennial year of Bluefield's Sacred Heart Church. Remember, Rejoice, and Renew.

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 7, 1995

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, as the 104th Congress considers changes to the unemployment compensation [UC] system, I would like to bring to your attention a recent speech by Leon Lynch, Vice President of the United Steelworkers of America. Mr. Lynch's views, which focus on the unemployment insurance reforms recommended by the Advisory Council on Unemployment Compensation, were delivered to the National Foundation for Unemployment Compensation and Workers Compensation last month in Atlanta. These remarks provide an important viewpoint that should become part of the debate over UC reform.

REMARKS OF LEON LYNCH TO THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION AND WORKERS COMPENSATION

The focus of my presentation today is unemployment insurance reforms rec-

ommended by the Advisory Council on Unemployment Compensation. To date, the Council has issued two reports containing a number of recommendations to improve our unemployment insurance program. The Council's major recommendations are focused on bringing the unemployment insurance system more into line with the realities of the 1990s economy and labor market. I believe they deserve the support of business and labor, and I want to explain why.

Since I joined the Advisory Council only late last summer, I did not directly participate in the adoption of the recommendations of the first report, which dealt mostly with the reform of the extended Benefits (EB) program. The second Council report, released in February 1995, focused broadly on the regular UI program. I was on board last year and I voted in favor of the recommendations of that report. The third and final report, due in February 1996, will focus on the administrative aspects of UI.

In all honesty, I am continuing to learn about our unemployment compensation system from the testimony presented by witnesses at Advisory Council meetings, the briefing papers prepared by Advisory Council staff, discussions among the Advisory Council, and meetings such as this. I have enjoyed my participation in the work of the Advisory Council and I hope to work for the adoption of the Council's recommendations at both the federal and state levels.

Having admitted that I am not an unemployment insurance expert, however, should not be taken as less than my full endorsement of the recommendations of the Advisory Council to date. You don't need a Ph.D to understand that our UI system is neither serving the needs of unemployed workers nor employers as well as it should.

As a trade union leader, I have long understood the terrible human impact of the defects in our UI system. These defects are much clearer to close observers. If you haven't done so, I encourage you to review the Advisory Council reports. They contain many more facts supporting the Council's recommendations than I can cover today. I hope you will take the time to review the reports since even those who regularly deal with UI will find a fair and impartial review of all aspects of the UI program.

I often hear employer representatives claim that our UI system isn't broken. I challenge you to read the reports with an open mind and come away with anything but a conclusion that, in key respects, our UI system can be improved and made to work better for all interested parties.

I want to begin my discussion by pointing out some of the factual findings from the February 1995 Advisory Council report. Many of you may be generally aware of UI developments, but I think these particular findings deserve mention.

First, there's been a serious erosion in the number of unemployed workers getting UI benefits. The ratio of insured unemployed workers (those that file a claim and have monetary eligibility) and the totally unemployed (those who are unemployed and actively seeking work) is widely used as an indicator of how many unemployed workers get UI benefits. In 1993, 32 of the 52 jurisdictions had an IU/TU ratio under 33 percent. Twelve states had a ratio of less than 25 percent. South Dakota had a ratio of 15.3 percent. In other words, the ratio of unemployed workers getting UI benefits was a third or less in a majority of the states, and less than 2 in 10 in South Dakota.

Complaints about the declining proportion of unemployed workers getting UI have not been met with sympathy by employers. However, even so-called "job losers" are no longer getting UI benefits at past levels. Job

losers fall in the unemployed workers category which is closest to the involuntarily unemployed workers who are supposed to get UI—even according to most employers.

The 1995 report finds a steep decline in receipt of UI benefits in the "job losers" category. In fact, the ratio of UI claimants to job losers has fallen nearly forty percent since 1970.

The other reason cited for the reduced number of unemployed workers getting UI benefits is that eligible workers apparently aren't applying. While the research on non-applicants is not as clear as we might wish, on a practical level there are many things we can do to encourage potentially eligible UI claimants to apply for benefits. These include providing better UI claims information to workers at the time of layoff, permitting electronic and telephone claims, prohibiting employer retaliation, and continuing to improve the customer service aspects of agency claims handling. I believe that the Advisory Council will consider some of these administrative matters in the coming year.

Analysts disagree about why the ratio of insured unemployed workers to totally unemployed workers has fallen, but all recent studies show that legislative restrictions on UI eligibility and disqualifications have contributed. The only argument among the experts is the weight assigned to federal and state UI law changes as compared to other factors.

In fact, in most states, there are dollar estimates made on the amount of money to be "saved" when legislative restrictions on UI are passed. Since many of you have pushed for this so-called "cost saving" legislation to reduce the number of UI benefits recipients in your states, we should have few claims of innocence in this audience. We in organized labor are past the point of needing more studies concerning the reasons for the decline in receipt of UI benefits. We expect positive action to reverse the decline.

Often, when government is slow to act or fails to act, we have to look for solutions elsewhere. That's what we've done in the Steelworkers—in this and other areas, such as employment security, pensions and health care.

For the unemployed, we have negotiated supplemental unemployment benefits—commonly known as SUB. The fair-minded employers we have contracts with recognize that unemployment compensation by itself—where it exists—is nowhere near sufficient to keep a family going.

With SUB, however, circumstances improve substantially. When one of our members is laid off, SUB will provide benefits ranging from 70 percent to 90 percent of the worker's wages. And it provides these benefits for two years.

When the worker is receiving UC, that amount is deducted from the SUB payment. When UC expires, SUB makes up the difference. The result is that no matter what the level of UC is, the worker receives the same percentage of wages.

The rationale is simple: Workers should not suffer for events over which they have no control. SUB payments help them to survive until they are recalled to their former jobs, or until they find new employment.

Even though we are proud of what we have done in this area, we feel this is an area that is properly the government's responsibility. Is any that with full knowledge of the atmosphere in Washington—an atmosphere with which I disagree completely. But that's a different story for a different time.

The problem we are dealing with today has its own import, and I'm pleased that the Advisory Council report this year makes specific recommendations to reverse the decline