

The CHAIRMAN: I simply put this out as a suggestion. The bill is in front of us and in reporting the bill we might suggest that some consideration be given by Labour and National Defence to the question of applying unemployment insurance to those who have had a period of short service in the army or something along that line. I do not see any reason why we should not suggest that the matter be studied and that the wishes of the armed forces be ascertained and that the whole thing be treated as would be the case with any other group who, it is felt, should be brought under unemployment insurance.

Mr. MACDOUGALL: That is precisely what I said, Mr. Chairman; precisely what I said.

The CHAIRMAN: I see. Then I see no reason why we should not consider this as part of our report in reporting the bill.

Mr. DINSDALE: I understand that with reference to unemployment insurance that any group of government employees can have themselves included in the program if they express that desire, is that correct?

Hon. Mr. LAPOINTE: I am not too familiar with the complexities of the Unemployment Insurance Act, but I do not think the mere fact that a group of employees express the desire to become insurable, guarantees that they become insurable. It calls for an amendment to the Act.

The CHAIRMAN: To the regulations under the Act.

Hon. Mr. LAPOINTE: Yes, it calls for an amendment to the regulations. That is the class of employees who can benefit under the Unemployment Insurance Act is determined by the regulations passed under the authority of the Act.

Mr. DINSDALE: Those regulations could be changed?

Hon. Mr. LAPOINTE: Oh yes, but the mere fact that a group of employees expresses a desire to become insurable when they are not insurable does not mean that this request is automatically granted.

Mr. DINSDALE: Oh no, they have to negotiate, of course.

Hon. Mr. LAPOINTE: But the civil servants do come under the Unemployment Insurance Act up until the time they are superannuated.

Mr. DINSDALE: This might be a good topic for discussion in the Current Affairs Bureau Department.

Mr. QUELCH: I think that would be the best solution, if we could make it optional, and allow the decision to rest with the soldiers as to whether or not they need it and then no one would have any grievance, but it would require a change in the Unemployment Insurance Act before that could be done.

The CHAIRMAN: This simply removes the Department of Veterans Affairs from the position of contributing to the fund on behalf of peacetime soldiers which is recognized as being unfair when we are not doing it for anyone else. In other words, everyone who comes under the Unemployment Insurance Act pays his own share of the cost of it, and the idea is that the Department of Veterans Affairs should not continue to pay the share of people serving in the peacetime army because there are lots of people who probably need that help just as much who are paying unemployment insurance. There is nothing to prevent the people in the armed forces making representations to be brought under the Act, and the Department of Labour then recommending a change in the regulations to bring them in subject to such conditions as have been mentioned. The only purpose of the bill is to obviate the necessity of the Department of Veterans Affairs doing something for the armed services in peacetime which it does not do for people in other occupations.

Mr. PHILPOTT: I suggest that we get on with the clause by clause discussion of the bill, and leave this discussion until later recommendations.