

Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971

"(2) The Commission may, with the approval of the Governor in Council and subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament, make regulations for including in insurable employment any person who is employed or otherwise engaged in a business within the definition of "business" in the Income Tax Act." and renumbering subsequent subclauses accordingly.

The intention of this motion is to include self-employed persons in the event that they would want to come under the plan.

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I may speak briefly to the motion of the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander). We have had discussion about it and his amended motion as far as it goes is quite acceptable to the government. However, in view of the fact that we intend to amend motion No. 3, in the few minutes left may I refer to the committee discussion about whether or not Members of Parliament should be included in the unemployment insurance plan. There was a sharp division of opinion, for various reasons. Some felt that we should be included, particularly school teachers who said we were imposing something on them that we were not prepared to impose on ourselves. Another school of thought was that by including ourselves under unemployment insurance we would be protecting those of us who may not be back here next June. I have wrestled with this problem in the interval.

No one wants to be included in unemployment insurance just for the purpose of accepting benefit but most of the members of the committee were prepared to be included, as an example to school teachers and others. Mr. Speaker, you may want to dispose of the hon. member's amendment to clause 4 first and then I may be permitted to introduce another amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the minister suggesting an amendment, in addition to the motion put forward by the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander)?

Mr. Mackasey: It would be an amendment to the same clause, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the minister would like to conclude his remarks I will ask for consent on both amendments at the same time.

Mr. Mackasey: The purpose of the amendment is simply to permit the Unemployment Insurance Commission, by regulation in the future—this does not mean it will happen—if after further consultation over the winter months or during the next session of Parliament it were felt desirable that members of the House of Commons should be included after the next election, to rule that this could be done. It would mean adding the following paragraph to the clause, stating "the tenure of an office as defined in the Canada Pension Plan."

Members of Parliament are covered under the Canada Pension Plan. All the amendment would do is permit the Unemployment Insurance Commission to include Members of Parliament, by regulation—at least those of us who have tenure of office as defined in the Canada Pen-

[Mr. Alexander.]

sion Plan—if at some future date it was felt desirable to do so.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I think this is a happy solution to the problem and I hope it can be accepted between now and 4.30.

Mr. Stan Schumacher (Palliser): Mr. Speaker, I find myself in a rather difficult position. In view of the fact that there seems to have been general agreement expressed among parties, I hope it will be understood that at this time I am speaking as a private member. I would like an opportunity to put on the record my views concerning this matter. I appreciate the intent of the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) and of the other persons involved in agreeing on the proposed amendment. It appears to me that their intention is to allow small private businessmen to come under the plan if they wish to do so. However, I do not think we are reaching any happy solution this way.

We must understand our system of government when considering these matters. If the executive decides that a certain group is to be included, a resolution will be proposed to Parliament and it can be pushed through without any real demand from the people concerned. What is wanted is an amendment allowing people to come under the plan if they wish to do so.

During discussion of this bill we had examples of groups of people, in particular school teachers, who did not want to come under the plan. As a result of the provisions of the bill there will be fewer people outside the plan. I fail to see how the amendment as proposed, in operation will be voluntary in nature. It will permit a government, by resolution, to bring additional people under the plan even though this may be against their wishes, and they will not be in position to defend themselves. If people want to come in, then by all means they should have that privilege; but it should be on their initiative and not the initiative of the Parliament of Canada as appears to be the case with this amendment.

● (4:30 p.m.)

Mr. Mackasey: I think the hon. member's remarks, which were pertinent, refer primarily to the amendment of the hon. member for Hamilton West. What it does is permit the Unemployment Insurance Commission upon request to define certain self-employed people as employed people and employees for the purpose of the act—taxi drivers, barbers and small entrepreneurs who need this type of coverage. It gives the Unemployment Insurance Commission the right to cover them by regulation in future if it is found desirable. I think that primarily what the hon. member had in mind was that it does not have to come back to Parliament and if it is found desirable in the view of hon. members, the commission would have the power to adjudicate on the question. I think this is all it is intended to do.

Mr. Schumacher: Can I ask the minister a question? Did I understand him to say that even though the commission can make regulations covering a certain group, they still will not have to come under this coverage?