

Supply—Labour

Mr. Pickersgill: Is the total number of persons employed reduced? This is statistical information that this research department would have.

Mr. Starr: No, it is not.

Mr. Herridge: I just want to say a few words in support of the contention put forward by the hon. member for Billingsgate just recently—excuse me, I mean Bonavista-Twilligate—with respect to some study to ensure a better understanding of the actual number of unemployed persons in Canada. We have gone on from year to year taking two sets of figures about which everyone has his own opinion.

I have discussed this matter with a number of people because I have been interested in ascertaining why people do not register for employment. In one case I was informed by the man that he knew there was no work available. Another chap told me the work that was available was unsuitable. Another one told me he could not leave home for family reasons. Another one told me he did not register for work because his wife was expecting a baby. Actually another man, on another occasion, said he did not register for work because he wanted his wife to have a baby. Another man told me he wanted to rest for a week or two. Another one was without the funds with which to pay the fare to the place where employment could be obtained. Another one was on a diet and could not leave home; he could not eat in a lumber or mining camp. Another man had insufficient money for the purchase of the clothing required to undertake employment in a mine some miles away. Another man was taking advantage of the opportunity to cut his year's fuel, and so on.

I do believe there should be a very close study made of this question so that, as soon as possible, we can have a figure given to us which would indicate the total number of unemployed in Canada, a figure in which we could have some confidence as representing the facts.

Mr. Starr: I appreciate the remarks of the hon. member very much because I have been giving some thought to this problem of having two sets of figures, and once in a while a third set of figures will be given by other people. This creates confusion. I have been considering having the department work out some new figure that would be more authentic and would be more to the point so that we would all know the exact number of unemployed.

Item agreed to.

[Mr. Starr.]

165. Annuities Act administration, \$1,242,512.

Mr. Badanai: I should like to ask the minister a question on this item. Has he given any consideration to increasing the ceiling of \$1,200 per year which is in effect now in connection with the annuities that can be purchased by a person in one year? When the Annuities Act was introduced some 20 years ago \$1,200 was considered to be a fair retiring allowance for a couple living in a very modest way. Since then, the value of the dollar, in terms of what it will purchase in food and commodities, has dropped to about 50 cents. I should like to hear from the minister whether he is considering allowing people to purchase an annuity of more than \$1,200 a year. Would the minister answer that question?

Mr. Starr: No, I am not. I am not giving that matter any consideration.

Mr. Badanai: I should like to ask the minister why not. As a matter of fact, I understand that the Department of Labour are anxious to see these annuities extended to embrace larger amounts in order to cover the necessities of life at the present time. Does the minister think that the value of the dollar today is the same as it was some 25 years ago? By no stretch of the imagination can anyone think that you can now buy for a dollar the same commodities that you bought 25 years ago. I urge the minister and the government to give this matter serious consideration because I think it is of vital importance to the people of the country.

Mr. Brassard (Lapointe): Can the minister tell the committee what is the interest rate paid on annuity? While I am on my feet, I should like to thank him very much for the courtesy he extended to the delegation from Saguenay and lake St. John yesterday when we were in his office to discuss unemployment.

Mr. Starr: The interest rate prevalent now is 4 per cent.

Item agreed to.

167. Civilian rehabilitation branch, including payments to the provinces to implement a program for the rehabilitation of disabled persons, in accordance with terms and conditions approved by the governor in council, \$209,850.

Mr. Roberge: I should like to know from the minister what provinces are participating in this program for disabled persons and what was the amount received last year by each of them?

Mr. Starr: The expenditures for the year 1958-59, up until March 31, 1959, were as follows: