

Unemployment Insurance Act

I must say that the problem of the fishermen is different from that of the agricultural workers, but we support this motion on the basis that the hon. member is trying to get the government to consider amending the act so that seasonal employees of the farmer may be brought under the Unemployment Insurance Act.

I cannot help but mention to my friends in the Social Credit party opposite that I listen with interest to their remarks on agricultural matters because I know that a good many of the people they represent live close to the soil. I want to draw their attention to the fact that I am one of the few members of parliament who lives a habitant way of life in the backwoods, and we have a certain affinity in that respect. That is why I am interested in their speeches on agriculture.

I wish to make one or two comments on the remarks made by the hon. member who spoke on behalf of the Liberal party. I noticed that at times he was almost indignant because action has not been taken to amend the act so that agricultural employees were covered by its provisions. He said it was strange that fishermen should be treated differently from farm labourers. It is not strange at all. The very party he represents is the reason for that situation, at least up to 1957. Does the hon. member not know that this subject has been discussed in the house for over 14 years? Members of this group, when they sat on the other side and faced the Liberal government, pleaded year after year at the request of their constituents and of the farm organizations to amend the act on the lines suggested by the hon. member who introduced this resolution.

Then the hon. member for Essex West (Mr. Gray) said that he could not understand—

Mr. Gray: Might I ask the hon. member a question?

Mr. Speaker: If he will accept it, but you cannot force it.

Mr. Gray: I would like to ask the hon. member who has been speaking whether he knows that this is 1962.

Mr. Herridge: Yes, I know it is 1962, but I know that members of our group pleaded with the Liberal government from 1946 till 1957 to make the amendments proposed by this resolution this afternoon. Then the hon. gentleman said it is strange that the act gives preference to a jockey, rather than to a farm labourer. The reason for that is the attitude taken towards a farm labourer by the former Liberal government and the present Progressive Conservative government. I am sure the hon. member has not read the debates of past years on this question in the house; otherwise

he would realize that it had been a topic of debate over a good number of years, but without any result to date.

Then again, farm organizations throughout the years have discussed this question. I have attended farm meetings. Resolutions have been presented to the government of Canada by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, to the government of British Columbia by the B.C. federation of agriculture, and to the government of Canada by the British Columbia fruit growers association. I can see as I sit here the paling face of the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate. I can see that this rests on his conscience, and I fully expect that he will rise and have something to say later on. He was a member of a government which refused to take action from 1946 to 1957.

Mr. Pickersgill: Would the hon. gentleman give me the *Hansard* references in 1946 and in subsequent years up to 1956 about which he was boasting a few moments ago?

Mr. Herridge: I have not got the *Hansard* references here, but I do remember attending a convention of the B.C. federation of agriculture—

Mr. Pickersgill: Would the hon. gentleman give them later?

Mr. Herridge: Possibly I will be able to look them up and give them to the hon. gentleman. Anyway this is a subject which has been of serious concern to farm organizations and farmers over a good period of years, because they felt they had suffered an injustice under the present terms of the Unemployment Insurance Act. The British Columbia fruit growers association has been particularly interested in this question, and I will tell the house why. They could never understand why there was a distinction between the worker who worked at packing fruit in the packing house and a worker who worked at the same time in the orchard picking the fruit. That is another illustration of the operation of the act. However, I have hopes that because the resolution has been introduced by the hon. member for Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale this government will be influenced to do something about it; and should the government be defeated in the spring, then because of the pangs of conscience suffered by hon. members opposite in the official opposition I hope that they will take some action if elected to office. However, the present circumstances have resulted in a lot of inconvenience to farmers. I can speak from my personal experience of conversations with a good many of them who wanted some seasonal labour for a month or so but who could not obtain it because the