

*Unemployment Insurance***UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE****SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFITS DURING WINTER SEASON—VARIOUS AMENDMENTS**

**Hon. Paul Martin (for the Minister of Labour)** moved that the house go into committee to consider the following resolution:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1940, to provide for supplementary benefits during the winter season in any year and government financial contribution in consequence thereof, for additional insurance coverage, for readjustment and simplification of rates of contribution, and for consequential amendments; to provide also for an increase in the membership of the unemployment insurance advisory committee from six to eight members; and to provide further that the members of the national employment committee shall receive the same remuneration as the members of the unemployment insurance advisory committee.

**Mr. Graydon:** Mr. Speaker, I know that the Acting Minister of Labour wishes to make a full explanation of this resolution, and we are most anxious at this time to facilitate his desire.

**Mr. Speaker:** Is it the pleasure of the house to adopt the motion?

**Mr. MacInnis:** No, Mr. Speaker. Under the circumstances I think it is due to the house that the minister should make at this time a statement of what is involved in the resolution before us. After that is done we can decide whether or not there is any urgency. If we can facilitate debate later on, I think we had better do so; but we must have the co-operation of the minister to begin with.

**Mr. Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure that I express the view of all hon. members when I say that we all regret the necessary absence of the Minister of Labour, and we look forward to his return within a very short time.

Of course I agree with what the hon. member who has just taken his seat has said, namely, that there should be an explanatory statement of the general scope and purposes of the amendments contemplated by the resolution now before the house.

We have in Canada a well-established and comprehensive national unemployment insurance scheme, which has been in operation since July, 1941, covering employed workers in industry and commerce. This act has provided and will continue to provide a first line of defence for workers and their families against unemployment. It gives protection in an automatic and systematic way for more than two and a half million workers. Including these workers and their dependents, over 7 million persons are offered a measure of protection, as a right and not as a dole or a charitable gift.

Since the first benefit payments were made in 1942, over \$223 million have been expended in unemployment insurance benefits. A complete system of regional and local insurance and employment offices has been established across Canada to administer the insurance provisions of the act and the national employment service which has been established in conjunction with the insurance operations.

These offices facilitate the placement of labour by informing persons in search of work of the jobs obtainable, and by informing employers of the type and number of persons seeking work. It offers a common meeting ground for employers and employees. Workers obtain employment sooner than would otherwise be possible, and employers' recruitment and placement costs are lower. As an illustration of the importance of this service to employees and to employers, as well as to our economy as a whole, it should be mentioned that 684,179 placements were made by these employment offices during the past year. Of these, 127,059 were casual and 557,120 were regular placements.

The protection provided to workers by the provision for unemployment insurance benefits in periods of unemployment has added very substantially to the stability of our national economy.

The government proposes in this bill to make provision, by the enactment of a new part to be added to the Unemployment Insurance Act, to give added protection to insured workers against unemployment in that period of the year when, due to the rigours of our winter climate, employment is normally at its lowest level, namely, in the period from January 1 to March 31 of each year.

The added protection to be provided takes the form of a provision for the payment of supplementary insurance benefits for periods of unemployment to persons employed in industries and occupations which are under the insurance coverage. These supplementary benefit payments will, subject to compliance with the qualification conditions provided in the legislation, be payable to persons unemployed in the period January 1 to March 31 in any year, but in the present calendar year will be payable from the date the legislation comes into force until April 15, 1950.

**Mr. Ferguson:** Does that affect unemployed members of parliament?

**Mr. Martin:** It would depend upon whether they come within the act.