

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

statistical data or exact figures that can prove mathematically that we are in a position, without further consideration, to give immediate passage to this bill, for I believe there is not much difficulty about the principle.

A few moments ago, the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett), noting that the intention of the hon. member who sponsors this measure is generous, regretted like us that—his government was in office at the time when the hon. member sat as a representative in this house in his first years—that his government did not take the initiative he wants our government to take.

Therefore, this means there is a problem. If the government does not act very quickly, if the government is not ready, when the principle is recognized to take immediate action, it is due to technical difficulties and problems relating to the practical application of the bill. In my opinion, we would not be in a position, even if we agreed in principle, to pass the bill as it is, because the hon. member did not indicate clearly enough how the government could defray the cost of implementing these new provisions.

Mr. Speaker, since we are dealing with the unemployment insurance problem, I must say, before resuming my seat that I am quite concerned about another insurance scheme, that of crop insurance.

Since the government, as well as the Quebec government, have made firm commitments in this connection, I am wondering—I see, Mr. Speaker, that you are about to call me to order, but I shall not stray from the subject completely—I say that I am concerned about the possible application of the Crop Insurance Act, because I think that, on the one hand, Mr. Courcy has not entirely agreed with the proposals of the federal Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Greene). I am wondering whether we shall be in a position to witness this year the implementation of crop insurance which is much more important than the application of the bill under study.

I am in agreement with the principle of that act. I commend the hon. member for his noble intentions, but since we are not advanced enough, both on the practical and on the technical level, I do not feel we are in a position to act readily upon the bill now before us.

● (5:50 p.m.)

**Mr. Caouette:** Mr. Speaker, will the hon. member allow a question?

[Mr. Choquette.]

**Mr. Choquette:** With pleasure, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Caouette:** Mr. Speaker, is the hon. member of the opinion for instance, that farmers and settlers in his riding like in mine, who work during the summer and contribute to unemployment insurance, but lose their jobs during the winter, should receive benefits which are now refused, because they are under agriculture rather than under labour, although they have paid their contributions for six or seven months of the year?

**Mr. Choquette:** Mr. Speaker, I am thoroughly in agreement with what the hon. member for Villeneuve says. It is very true, and I know, because I represent an agricultural riding and farmers come to me to complain about this injustice.

As this principle seems to have unanimous approval, I wonder whether this matter should not be referred to some committee of the house, so that concrete steps could be taken and this principle implemented soon.

**Mr. Jean Chrétien (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance):** Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member who spoke before me and others who took part in this interesting debate. I entirely agree with the principle of the bill.

However, I wish to point out that the Unemployment Insurance Act should be revised during this session, as was announced in the speech from the throne if, however, we ever resume the study of legislation, for, at this rate, I do not see when we shall begin our examination of this new legislation.

I am inclined to believe that this problem will be examined and will receive all the consideration it deserves, because it is absolutely unfair, in my opinion, that farm workers—they are not farmers or farm owners, but employees like all other employees—should not benefit from social security measures established for everyone in this country.

However, as the hon. member for Medicine Hat (Mr. Olson) pointed out, there are great technical difficulties involved in that problem. Why? Because often those farm workers only work a few days or a few weeks. In addition, in the case of employers who have but one employee during certain seasons, it seems that the method of checking their operations in order to prevent abuse will require a thorough study on the part of the government.