

Unemployment Insurance Act

has fewer than 24 weeks of contributions, then of course he is not eligible. But I want to point out to him that if it is over 15 he is eligible for seasonal benefits and he gets his benefits as of December 1 of that calendar year.

Mr. Howard: I am not talking about seasonal benefits.

Mr. Starr: He is eligible for seasonal benefits even if he is below 24 and over 15.

Mr. Howard: Can the minister indicate what were the results on an actuarial basis of the extra cost to the fund for this survey that he said was done a couple of years ago?

Mr. Starr: I am told by the officials that they have not the information here, but we shall be glad to give it to the hon. member for his study. We shall look it up and supply him with it.

Mr. Howard: That can be done at some future time; I am not too concerned about it at this time.

I should like to make a comment or two about the effect of subsection 2 of section 45. A few years ago when the alteration was made with respect to computing the contributions and benefits on a weekly basis instead of on a daily basis the period of time which was originally set was 30 weeks. We discovered, especially in so far as the loggers on the west coast were concerned—I was associated with the union at that particular time—and also in so far as other workmen were concerned, that many of them found it nearly impossible to comply with the 30 week requirement and a request was made for a review and a reduction. At a subsequent session of parliament the 30-week period was reduced to 24, which did allow many more workmen to fit into the qualifications and thereby receive benefits.

If I may explain again to the minister, in so far as the logging industry on the west coast in concerned, it applied to the logging industry in the interior of the province and it applied in a degree to the construction industry in various parts of Canada. It also applied to other similar categories of workmen who found that because of the weather particularly, they were unable to obtain sufficient working time during the year to accumulate 24 weeks contributions, and thereby were denied the right of benefits except, as the minister said, the right of seasonal benefits which may or may not correspond with that particular time of the year. Many of the employees find that they are out of work in the summer time, not in the winter time when the seasonal benefit scheme applies, but in the summer when in some instances the entire

[Mr. Starr.]

logging industry is shut down because of extremely high fire hazards in dry weather. We find that this 24 week period does work adversely on many workmen in the country. It would certainly be desirable if the minister would undertake to give more study to this particular question than he has given to it in the past and review the work which was done two years ago, as he said. I presume that was in 1956, nearly four years ago, when the period was reduced from 30 to 24 weeks.

In any event, I think it is necessary to raise this particular question as it affects a particular group of workmen. I think it is necessary to raise it by way of debate and ask the minister to consider it. Not only that, but I think we should afford the committee an opportunity to debate this question in a formal way so that the minister may be guided by other opinions. I think we should afford the committee an opportunity to make a decision by vote as to whether or not this particular 24-week period should be reduced. Accordingly, I have an amendment along these lines which I should like to move. It reads:

Subsection (2) of section 45 of the said act is repealed and the following substituted therefor:

"(2) If an insured person, within the period specified in paragraph (a) of subsection (1), had established a previous benefit period, then the subsequent benefit period is not established unless he proves that at least 20 of the contribution weeks referred to in the said paragraph (a) were

(a) in the period of 52 weeks immediately preceding the most recent Sunday before the day on which he makes the claim, or

(b) in the period since the commencement of the immediately preceding benefit period, whichever is the longer period."

This is word for word subsection (2) as it is at the present time, with the exception of substituting "20" for "24".

Mr. Starr: May I point out to you that section 45 (2) is not under discussion, nor does it appear in the amendments at all. It is only section 45 (3) that is being amended in the amendments before the committee.

The Chairman: I understand the hon. member is trying to fit this into the subclause we are discussing. It does not seem to be relevant at all to what we are discussing.

Mr. Howard: The minister is seeking to have section 45 (3) amended. This is the only place where one can suggest an amendment to another part of section 45, namely subsection 2. It is for that reason that I seek to move this in a formal way. There is no other way in which it can be done, other than to bring it forward in this way. I do not think we should have to wait until the minister decides whether or not he himself intends to propose an amendment to subsection 2, in which case