

points in connection with the bill before us. Each of them drew attention to the "bugs", so to speak, which exist in the act at the present time and which should be corrected. This is where we are up against some serious difficulties. I would venture to say there is no act on the statute books of Canada which has more "bugs" in it than the present Unemployment Insurance Act.

The first thought of the government should be to eliminate these deficiencies. I see nothing in the bill before us which will do so. In fact there are certain implications in it which might be more harmful than otherwise. I am not opposed to the principle of insurance against unemployment through a scheme which is in fact an insurance program, but I am opposed to features in the legislation which make it a welfare program rather than an insurance program.

Those who put forth the effort to establish the legislation in the beginning never intended that it should become a welfare program. However, this element has crept into it and it is unfortunate that it should be present.

One of the problems faced by the stockmen and ranchers of western Canada is this: They want more labour for their ranches, but now they are likely to find it more difficult than ever to get labour. They did not ask for unemployment insurance to apply to ranch labour. Now, having experienced its effects, they are asking that it be removed from coverage by the act. Inclusion of ranch labour was supposed to increase the amount of labour available for ranches. The present bill, instead of helping to increase the supply of labour, will actually diminish it.

What I have just said applies not only to the operators of these big ranches; the workers themselves have approached me in delegations asking that they be removed from coverage by the act. If a worker on a ranch in western Canada is to receive 50 per cent of his summer wages in unemployment insurance, when winter comes the stockmen out there who have cattle to feed will not be able to hire anyone to do the work. No one will want to work out in the open in the cold weather if he can get half his summer wages in unemployment insurance. Indeed, I know of many who would take the course of least resistance and try to rig things in such a way as to obtain unemployment insurance benefits. All of them seem able to do it, and this is what is being done. People are getting around the act. So instead of more labour being available to stockmen, less is available. This is why both

Unemployment Insurance Act

on the labour side and on the management side there are requests for exemption from the operation of the act. The stockmen never asked to be covered by it and now they would like to be exempt.

I want to get this across to the government and to all others concerned. At the present time the Western Stock Growers are in session in Calgary. At past conventions this subject has come up for discussion and members have expressed their views in no uncertain words. Delegations have come to me privately asking that ranch workers be excluded from the provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Act. They want labour to help them on their ranches. In addition, the labourers do not want these deductions to be made from their wages. On occasions when ranchers have made deductions in respect of insurance they have lost their hired help. The labourer gets sore and says: "The other fellow did not deduct it, so I will go and work for him, or someone else".

● (4:40 p.m.)

The stockman is faced with a problem of paying the total amount out of his own pocket in order to come under the scheme and be within the law. He must provide the worker with the stamps or else he loses his labour if he deducts the cost of the insurance from the workers salary. This is not working out. What I have described is just one of the "bugs". There are hundreds of others in the unemployment insurance program. Surely the government will take a careful look at these things. It will not have to go far to find somebody who will give other illustrations. I hope that the one I have mentioned will receive serious consideration and that the government will eliminate these ranching people from the provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Act, because they do not want to come within its provisions.

Mr. S. J. Enns (Portage-Neepawa): Mr. Speaker, I wish to ask the minister a question before he rises to close the debate. Has the interdepartmental committee, which has been studying the needed broader amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act, completed its work, and can we expect the introduction of those amendments early next session? Perhaps I may be allowed to sum up in one statement the essence of the remarks I would have made had I chosen to make a speech. From the contributions made by other hon. members it is quite clear that there is a feeling abroad in this land that social security