

*Supply—Labour*

I know that in my own city of Hamilton they went into our large plants, and they did such important and heavy work as operating the huge cranes in our big industrial plants. They drove heavy trucks, and they did all manner of work which we had previously thought could be done only by men. So the whole picture of women's employment changed during those two periods, and today we have a large labour force of women which is increasing every year.

It is with this over-all picture in mind that I compliment the minister on his decision to establish this women's bureau. I am sure he is going to have difficulty selecting the proper person to head the bureau. By that I do not mean he will have difficulty in finding a person; he will have difficulty in selecting one woman from the many able and competent women who are available to him for that purpose. It is not a job I would like to undertake myself, but I know that whoever he finally selects will do a good job for the women of Canada and for Canada as well.

I ask the minister to go one step further and consider a suggestion I made last year and I think the year before, namely to enlarge the unemployment insurance commission by the addition of a woman to that body. I made that suggestion on other occasions, and I become more and more convinced that it would be a desirable move. I can assure the minister that although it would mean the spending of some more money in so far as the members of this party are concerned they would be glad to acquiesce in that without any criticism of the outlay.

In these days we frequently hear of discrimination of one kind and another. We had quite a bit of discussion on the matter of discrimination this year when the Fair Employment Practices Act was under consideration, which we finally passed. But there are discriminations other than race, creed and colour. I should like to mention a couple of them. For instance, there is the discrimination against the older worker. In my opinion this represents a very serious cost in some of the government agencies. There is discrimination against women in the matter of retirement age.

The first case that comes to my mind is the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, where the retirement age for men is 65 and the retirement age for women is 60. But quite apart from the matter of the retirement age there is a very real problem in the matter of re-employment for those people who are past 40 years of age and who, for one reason or another have a period of

unemployment. As they grow older the situation becomes more and more serious. Each lay-off means increasing hardship to the man or woman over 40 years of age who desires to re-enter the field of employment. Each time he or she is laid off the chance of finding employment becomes less.

I believe this is another point upon which the Department of Labour should expand its energies. I know a great deal has already been done in that regard; but it seems to me that if we are going to achieve full production in Canada, and if we are going to make life in this country worth living for all the people, we must find means of utilizing all the available productive capacity within the country.

I should like to make some remarks with respect to the Unemployment Insurance Act, and the fund that has been built up. In his introductory remarks the minister made reference to the size of the fund as of February 28, stating that it amounted to something more than \$858 million. Eleven months ago, at March 31, 1952, it stood at \$778 million. Despite the fact that there were increases in the benefits during the year, these figures show that the fund has steadily increased over the past few years at the rate of approximately \$80 million each year.

As a matter of fact the figures show that in the fiscal year ended March 31, 1948 the fund stood at \$447,734,000. I have already pointed out that in February of this year it stood at something more than \$858 million, almost twice the amount of five years ago. I dare say that when we have the figures for the end of March we will find that the fund is double the amount it was five years ago.

This causes one to wonder whether it was ever intended that the fund should reach such proportions. I think when this fund was first started it is very doubtful if it was ever anticipated that it would be a billion dollar fund; I doubt that very much. Of course at that time no one expected we would have so many years of steady employment for our people. At that time, of course, there were classes who were not covered but who are covered today. But despite the fact that only about half our working force is covered by unemployment insurance, the fund has grown by leaps and bounds.

This question arises, how far shall we go in building up this fund? If we think any given place is the suitable place at which to stop, how shall we go about holding it in that position? Shall we increase the benefits? Shall we lower the contributions? Or, as has