

Supply—Labour

salary, because he is not assigned to a good part of the bush or because the foreman does not happen to like him, he will get discouraged and finally leave his job. So he leaves his job which does not pay him enough to keep his family alive, and I have proof of this. So he is forced to leave his job to take a chance elsewhere. But, then, the contractor simply gives the reason for departure: job not terminated—work not terminated. I would like to call the attention of the minister particularly to these words: work not terminated. Then, when the man goes to the unemployment insurance office and has this report on his file, he is punished for a month or two, because he left a non-paying job which did not bring in sufficient wages to keep his family alive. He is punished for not having stayed on this ridiculous job.

I think that calling the minister's attention to this point will prompt him to review the Unemployment Insurance Act and to consider this paragraph which, in fact, gives complete authority and domination to the employer over his employee.

Most employers are fair and honest, but to avoid such injustice occurring too often because some employers want revenge on the worker, well, the next legislation will have to give more protection to the employee.

There is also the case of the farmer who goes in the bush during winter months. He works in the bush for two, three, four months and he is told that an amount is being deducted from his salary for his unemployment insurance. He is not even consulted about it. When spring comes, he cannot get any benefits. Why? Because that farmer has two, three, five or ten milch cows; he has an income, and that prevents him from getting benefits.

Mr. Chairman, I again call the attention of the hon. minister to this point. I think it is the inspectors who do not understand the meaning of the law. They do not know how to enforce it in the case of workers such as those. I suggest that in the case of that man, who had to work six months, perhaps seven in the bush, his main work is not that of taking care of his animals in the barn—since his sons and his wife are doing that—his main work is that of a lumberjack and he should therefore qualify.

For years already, since the coming into force of the Unemployment Insurance Act, we have been trying to do justice to those workers and the answer we get is: The law is the law. Well, the law is made to be interpreted.

In my opinion, some investigators stick too close to the law. It will have to be made clearer to ensure fairness to farmers on the part of those investigators. Farmers must be able to benefit by unemployment insurance when they cease lumber operations in the spring. If they cannot be covered by it, let them not be charged the unemployment insurance premium. I believe that the one who pays—no matter what interpretation you give to the act—has a right to draw benefits when misfortune strikes.

• (4:40 p.m.)

It is somewhat like fire insurance or any other type of insurance. If it were a private fire insurance company which did not want too honour claims when the premium had been paid, well the policy-holder would go to court and win his case. But since the government is involved, any excuse is contrived, any investigation is conducted and the investigator always has the last word. You will say perhaps: of course, but there is arbitration. Well, Mr. Chairman, I have suggested arbitration to several of them, but now when the subject of arbitration is brought up, I tell them: Do not go, it is useless. Following the investigation, the investigator's ruling is upheld and that is that.

I think, Mr. Chairman, that those few remarks about lumbermen and farmers will be well received by the minister and that the new amended legislation will do justice to those two groups of workers.

There is also the case of a son employed by his father. I had the opportunity to make inquiries and plead the case of some of them, for instance, a son who worked as a cheesemaker for three years for his father. The son did not own the cheese dairy at all, and he was denied the unemployment insurance precisely because his father was the owner. Well now, I think that there is still something to be done here. When a pater familias employs his son, or any other relative, these employees should be considered as mere workers and should be eligible for unemployment insurance benefits. Once again, since they were allowed to pay the dues, they must benefit from the protection of unemployment insurance.

These are the few observations I wanted to make. I do not want to extend the discussion. I am sure that the hon. minister will make a note of these few comments.

Mr. Pelletier: Mr. Chairman, I will only take a few minutes to refer to the question raised by the hon. member for Lapointe (Mr.