

*Unemployment Insurance Act**(Translation):*

Mr. J. L. Frenette (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, I should like first of all to thank the hon. member for Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale (Mr. Rapp) for having introduced this motion of concern to all farming people, and especially to farm workers, which enables us at the same time to deal with the very important problem of unemployment insurance, a problem of general interest.

We endorse the principle and the essence of this motion, the purpose of which is to give a more effective protection to farm workers. We shall not take up too much of the time of the house so that the matter may come to a vote.

Mr. Speaker, our first argument is that farm workers are surely entitled to the same protection given to all other classes of workers, because their needs are the same.

It is acknowledged that those occasional or seasonal workers deserve a special attention since they find themselves in a situation that is quite particular. In my opinion, and as was stated earlier, lumbermen could very well be included in that category.

Very often, the land owner who wants to cut lumber on part of his woodlot hires lumbermen, but since these lumbermen under the act are considered as agricultural workers, they are not entitled to unemployment insurance benefits.

Now, since we are of the opinion that these workers deserve special attention, we must necessarily take special action.

The word insurance loses somewhat of its meaning for that class of casual or seasonal workers, because we know beforehand that the unemployment insurance benefits will be much higher than the contributions paid by these workers. The unemployment insurance fund is therefore handicapped by this situation, and I suggest that the benefits thus drawn from the general fund should be paid out of a special fund, to which the public treasury should be asked to contribute more than it does for the general unemployment insurance.

Mr. Speaker, we also suggest that regulations be made easier and more flexible so that those seasonal or casual workers may take advantage of unemployment insurance benefits.

Along the same line and since that notice of motion has been introduced, we call upon the government to consider the problem of the small contractor in the cities and towns of our constituencies. Actually, I am thinking

[Mr. Gray.]

of carpenters, plumbers or painters who very often do jobs on their own and then, not having any work, must rent their services as wage earners to contractors. Since they work mostly on their own account, they find it exceedingly difficult to get unemployment insurance benefits.

That is why we feel the government ought to consider that particular problem of some of our workers. Moreover, since it appears that unemployment has to be accepted as something permanent, the Unemployment Insurance Act should be completely reviewed and adapted to the needs of the present situation.

I have in mind the problems facing the unemployed because of the fact that unemployment benefit cheques do not mention the period of unemployment covered by the said cheques. As a matter of fact, I have been aware of several cases where unemployed people had problems with the unemployment insurance commission because they were charged with getting benefits—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope the hon. member does not intend to cover the whole field of unemployment insurance because we are at present discussing a motion merely pointing out the problems of seasonal farm labourers. I sincerely regret to interrupt the hon. member, but I must tell him that he cannot discuss all the provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Act. So, I hope the hon. member will come back to the subject matter.

Mr. Frenette: I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I am sorry if my remarks were a little irrelevant.

I therefore come back to the subject matter, that is the problem of farm labourers. Since I do not want to talk this motion out, I shall conclude my remarks by saying that we completely agree with the mover of the motion and if there is a vote we shall certainly vote for the motion.

(Text):

Mr. H. W. Herridge (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, as one who is proud to be a peasant farmer, I rise on behalf of this party to express our support for the spirit and purpose of this motion. So as to explain clearly what I wish to express, I will just quote the motion. It reads:

That in the opinion of this house, the government should consider the advisability of amending the Unemployment Insurance Act so that seasonal farm labourers would receive benefits similar to those paid at the present time to seasonal fishermen.