

*Supply—Labour*

are willing to accept employment anywhere at any wage rate and in any capacity, thus getting away from the strictness of application of that particular section. I submit that once this sort of attitude toward the law becomes prevalent, and it is becoming more and more so as people become more conversant with what is taking place with regard to the interpretation of the section, the law falls into disrepute and people are led into dishonesty in order to get the benefits that they consider are legitimately theirs under the act. They do not see anything wrong in doing that sort of thing. Persons in large metropolitan areas such as Vancouver, Toronto or Winnipeg are in areas where there are great employment opportunities in a variety of trades and jobs and these other people do not see why an individual, merely because he happens to live in a large metropolitan area, should be able to receive benefits when they who have been living in the north or in some other remote area have been denied benefits. They do not see anything wrong about being expansive in their remarks to the insurance officer and saying that they are willing to work anywhere at any time and for any wage rate.

I realize this is something which can only be dealt with by an amendment to the statute because the interpretation of the present section has been so narrow and confined as to not permit of any broadening, and the only way we can break out of this rigidity is by changing the law itself. I point out again to the minister, as has been pointed out before, that this situation is working an undue hardship on many claimants. Because of the rigidity of the section and the leading nature of the questions asked, there is an unfair and unjust application of the law to many claimants who apply for benefits. I think the only solution open to us is for the minister to introduce an amendment to the section so that it can be applied in a broader manner than it has been in the past few years.

I do not know if the minister wants to make any comments pro or con. I have refrained from mentioning the names of individuals because it is not the thing to do, especially when there are quite a number of cases that revolve around this point, but I am sure the individuals who are interested as claimants would be interested in having the minister at least give this matter sympathetic consideration. If the minister would care to make any comment it would be helpful.

[Mr. Howard.]

**Mr. MacEachen:** Mr. Chairman, I am sure almost all members of the house have representations from claimants and one of the most important subjects in those representations has to do with the application of the availability for work provision, because it is of the essence of qualification for benefits. As the hon. member for Skeena has said, the commission is powerless. I am quite ready to give a clear undertaking that this matter will be considered in the light of amendments we hope to introduce to the insurance system as quickly as we can. We will consider this question.

Item agreed to.

## LEGISLATION

5d. The Senate—general administration, \$107,600.

**Mr. Howard:** Mr. Chairman, before you put the question on this particular item I should like to make a few comments. It applies to the operation of what is politely or impolitely, depending upon the mood of the individual, referred to as the other place. This has always seemed to me to be a strange way to refer to it and I would prefer to refer to it as the Senate because that is what it is, and it is almost always referred to in that way.

The program of the New Democratic party, as was the case with our predecessor, the C.C.F., includes the abolition of the Senate. As that is one of the things we would like to see accomplished I cannot in conscience lend my support to the item before us for the simple reason that by so doing we would be running counter to our belief. We cannot support an item which tends to perpetuate a structure that we would like to see abandoned and cease to exist.

For many years the Senate has been nothing more than a haven for political appointees, regardless of what various prime ministers and political leaders have said over the years, even from the time of Sir John A. Macdonald, who I understand wanted to bring about some beneficial changes in the institution at that time. He had some idea that the Senate would be able to give what he called sober second thought to legislation which might be passed by a presumably rash House of Commons. It might be that sort of sober second thought one would give after over-indulging in food and drink, a sort of sobriety arising out of sluggishness. This is the type of thing that has existed in the Senate, more an operation out of lethargy than anything else.