

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

I listened to the hon. member who has just completed his remarks; I found them interesting but I do not see how his proposals would apply in all circumstances. I am sure they would do nothing but add to the problem of unemployment and make it far more difficult for the agriculture industry to get workers.

What has this government done for the industry, when it comes to hiring help? It has recently brought in the Canada Pension Plan, a plan which in many cases has been rejected both by the farmers and by their hired help. We believe they intend to bring in medicare and workmen's compensation measures. We are told that in the years ahead there may be a guaranteed income, or even provision for a minimum wage in the industry.

I would have no objection if there were a compensatory increase in the income realized by farmers today. However, this has not been the case. On the contrary we have seen incomes and prices in the industry reduced. This measure would do nothing more than increase still further costs to the agriculture industry. It is all well and good to say that since the cost of living is going up unemployment insurance should go up, too. Again I repeat that the act should be changed so as to make it more of an insurance plan. Two classes of insurance should have been set up, one for jobs which tend to be regular and another for employment which is more seasonal. Even though a million dollars has been recovered in respect of benefits paid out to people making false claims, I believe there are still too many abuses taking place and these have a particularly detrimental effect on the agriculture industry to which this legislation was applied only in April last. This has not made it any easier to hire men to work on farms and ranches.

The availability of unemployment benefit to their workers may have helped farmers cultivating such crops as tobacco, potatoes, fruit and vegetables, including sugar beets and so on, but I say the plan should have been introduced to the agriculture industry on a voluntary basis. I cannot for the life of me see why it cannot even now be reinstated on such a basis. If this bill passes, its provisions will do nothing but increase the cost of production to farmers who are today finding themselves in a tighter cost squeeze than ever. It will not help farmers to acquire hired help. Had the minister in presenting this bill paid greater attention to the insurance factor, or given us some assurance that the regulations would be enforced to greater effect—for example, if the word "suitable" had been struck out of the

[Mr. Horner (Acadia).]

regulations completely—I might have found myself supporting it. In the circumstances, however, I have no hesitation in saying I have no liking for it whatever. I believe it would be detrimental to an industry which most of my constituents are vitally concerned about, and for this reason I shall vote against it.

**Mr. E. Nasserden (Rosthern):** I should like to say a few words with regard to the measure before us—words of encouragement to the minister for what I believe he is trying to achieve by bringing this bill forward.

My constituency is primarily an agricultural one, but many of the people who live there in close vicinity to Saskatoon depend on seasonal labour for their livelihood. A large number of my constituents are available for work during the winter months, many of them experienced in the trades in which they are involved, and I would not like to see anything done which might endanger the possibility of their securing unemployment insurance during the period of benefit for which they are eligible.

As I look at the problem which has been posed by my hon. friend from Acadia (Mr. Horner) I cannot help but think that it illustrates more directly than anything else could the lack of attention which has been paid during the last few years to the whole question of agricultural prices. This, however, is a subject separate from the one under discussion this afternoon.

In spite of the additional benefits which may accrue to labour, a measure such as this should provide an additional market, or a more stable market, for farm products than otherwise might be the case. In some parts of the agriculture industry, and certainly in the construction trades it is necessary to provide something to assist the development of a seasonal labour force which will be available to undertake the tremendous tasks which face us in Canada. I think of a lag in housing and in construction generally over the past few years. We shall certainly need a large pool of seasonal labour, having regard to our climate, if these projects are to go forward rapidly.

If I have any criticism to make of the government it is that they have made it so difficult for the municipalities to undertake winter works; they have cut the feet from under the winter works program instituted when the right hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) was prime minister of this country. The effort they made to increase housing construction by means of the \$500 bonus—