

I want to say first to the minister that my relations with those who administer the unemployment insurance and selective service regulations have been very happy. The administration, from the maritime director down to the local offices, with whom I have had to deal have been very co-operative and efficient, and while they had the selective service regulations under their administration they regulated manpower to a large extent.

I was sorry to see that phase of the unemployment insurance office set-up abandoned. The employer used to put in his requirements and the officials could direct the employees to suitable employment and so forth. But today that phase of the work has been discontinued. The employers no longer use it for that purpose, and about all the unemployment insurance officers can do is to register the man and tell him where he may go and get employment. It has been difficult, because the average person who comes in and registers for employment often blames the unemployment insurance officer for not being able to secure employment for him when in reality such officers have nothing to do with the direction of employees into any particular industry.

There is one thing I wish to bring forcefully to the minister's attention. I have written him on this subject and I have had his reply. I have always argued that social legislation in Canada should be reciprocal with similar legislation in any other part of the British empire. In the matter of unemployment insurance it is not reciprocal with British unemployment insurance, and this has created difficulties for Canadians. I have had cases come to my attention of seamen in particular. I can think of one seaman who served in the British merchant marine all during the war and up to the end of 1947. These men paid unemployment insurance in Britain. The British government then repatriated them. They were sent home. When they landed in Canada they were of the opinion they could apply for unemployment insurance and have it paid in Canada. They believed they could register for employment. I was reasonably sure, after looking at their books, and finding them paid up to date, that there would be sufficient administrative latitude granted to the commission to take care of cases of that kind, but I was advised by the minister's office that there was no reciprocal arrangement with Britain with regard to unemployment insurance.

If the act is to be amended and the scope broadened, that is one particular phase of unemployment insurance which should be considered by the minister. We shall not have very many cases of that kind, but where there

is even one case or there are two or ten cases the individuals are as badly affected as if there were hundreds. To the individual it is the most important thing in the world. I suggest that the minister should consider this matter before the bill is introduced.

Another matter that I brought to his attention and tried for some considerable time to have ironed out is the problem of the veteran who came back and took employment in some given industry, but who did not work there long enough to make the 180 contributions which would qualify him for benefits. He may have made 80, 90 or 100 contributions; I think it was 107 contributions in the case that I brought to the attention of the department. The individual to whom I have reference then left his employment—he was on the railroad—and took a course, under the regulations laid down by the government in the rehabilitation set-up. After completing the course, he came back but could not secure employment in the field for which he was trained. He applied for unemployment insurance and was told by the officials that he could not secure unemployment insurance because he had not made a sufficient number of contributions to establish the benefit year. He then applied for his armed services credits, which would have qualified him under ordinary circumstances. He was told then that, because he was taking this course, they could not give him the armed services credit, with the result that the boy was unemployed for a long time and, as far as I know, he may still be unemployed. I know he was unemployed in November, 1947. To meet that particular case would require only a slight change.

I have always contended that one cannot make these rules and regulations so rigid that the people who apply them are merely automatons who read a book. There is no latitude given them which permits them to exercise any discretion where there are extenuating circumstances. I think any parliament or any government which brings in an act and makes it so rigid as that has very little confidence in the people appointed to administer that act. I know the officials of the minister's department; I know the minister himself, and I suggest that the deputy minister or someone at the top of the administrative staff should be able to say: This is a small problem; very little money is involved in it; therefore we shall use our discretion. I know they are borderline cases; nevertheless they affect people. By the attitude that has been taken in the past you have created in the mind of this individual a resentment which will be aired in every circle in which he travels. Why not give the deputy minister or someone in the department the