

Unemployment Insurance Act

Hamilton West in the suggestion that this separation of employment period should not be as now set out in the act. I would ask the minister and the government to review this condition to see if it would not be possible to make a change so that the regulation could be viewed with some measure of approval by the ladies of the country.

Mr. Fraser (St. John's East): Mr. Chairman, it is not my intention to delay the work of the committee, and with that in mind I shall confine my remarks to one particular matter. This matter, which I believe can be discussed properly now, concerns the insurability of Newfoundlanders employed by United States civilian contractors and military authorities on United States leased bases in Newfoundland. I feel I should mention this matter because of the statement made by the hon. member for Comox-Alberni in the closing stages of the debate on second reading of the bill. The hon. member's statement is recorded in *Hansard* for May 9 at page 3591 where he told the house that employees of United States civilian contractors on United States leased bases in Newfoundland were not covered by the Canadian Unemployment Insurance Act. That statement is incorrect.

I have checked with the Department of Labour and also with the unemployment insurance commission, and I find there is no doubt that not only are all Canadian, including Newfoundland, employees of the United States civilian contractors on United States leased bases in Newfoundland covered at the present time by the Unemployment Insurance Act, but they have been so covered ever since the union of Newfoundland with Canada, at which time negotiations were set afoot by the government of Canada with the government of the United States for that purpose.

May I say in all sincerity that I appreciate the interest the hon. member for Comox-Alberni has taken in this matter concerning the welfare of the workers on these bases in Newfoundland. I fear however that quite unintentionally his statement has created a misleading impression, and I feel that impression ought to be removed.

I would point out however that there is a second category of Newfoundland employees on the bases who are not covered by our Unemployment Insurance Act at the present time. These are workmen who are employed, not by United States civilian contractors, but directly by the United States air force or naval authorities. Presumably the reason for non-coverage in this case is that, in the United States, employees of the government up to this point have not been covered by unemployment insurance. I understand however

that last autumn a recommendation was made by President Eisenhower to bring certain classes of government employees within the scope of unemployment insurance in the United States. A statement to that effect was made by Mr. Barclay, director of unemployment insurance, when he appeared before the committee on industrial relations, and the reference can be found at page 224 of the proceedings of that committee.

As soon as the unemployment insurance commission heard of this recommendation by the President of the United States it immediately broached the question of extending any coverage offered to government employees in the United States to Newfoundlanders and other Canadians employed by United States authorities on leased bases in Newfoundland. I understand further negotiations have been proceeding between our ambassador in the United States and the American government with a view to accomplishing this very important objective. I hope and trust that these negotiations will soon reach a speedy and satisfactory conclusion.

Before concluding, Mr. Chairman, it might interest the committee to know the numbers of Canadian employees on these leased bases. I am indebted to Mr. Barclay in this connection, because he obtained for me from the St. John's office of the unemployment insurance commission the following information which indicates that those who are employees of contractors and are therefore insured under the act are as follows: United States air force in Newfoundland, 1,200; United States air force at Goose Bay,—and I presume that applies to the United States installations on the Canadian base there—1,500; and the United States navy at Argentia, 200; making a total of 2,900 employees as of May 27, 1955, who were under the terms of our Unemployment Insurance Act.

It should be noted however that this statement adds that both the 1,200 employees in Newfoundland and the 1,500 employees at Goose Bay are expected to increase in number as the work develops. I am sure the house will be glad to note that the increase in the number of insurable employees at the United States naval base at Argentia is expected to rise from 200 to 2,000. This will mean that the total number of insurable employees on all these bases will be 4,700.

The numbers of those employed directly by the American authorities on these bases, and therefore not insured at the present time, are as follows: United States air force in Newfoundland and Labrador, 4,900; United States navy at Argentia, 600; making a total of 5,500. So that at the present time the non-insurable employees number almost twice as