

Unemployment Insurance Act

distress caused by winter unemployment. But this measure does not go nearly far enough, because there are many people it does not help at all. And those people are worthy and deserving of help. I hope the minister will consider this matter seriously, and when on Thursday he speaks on his main measure, I hope he will give the house some indication of the government's attitude in this whole matter.

Mr. Barnett: Mr. Chairman, I hope before the discussion of this resolution is concluded the minister will give some statement as to what consideration has been given, if any, to the matter of the extension of the period of duration of supplementary benefits. It seems to me there are at least three main aspects to be considered when the matter of supplementary benefits is under review. One of these is the amount of benefits to be paid; another is the period under which those benefits will be available to persons qualifying; and the third is the duration of time during which the possibility of receiving those benefits will be in effect.

Only two of these matters is mentioned in the resolution before us. I for one feel that the other consideration is one of major importance as well. I would have hoped that when this measure was introduced at least some consideration would have been given to an extension of the duration of time in which supplementary benefits would be in effect.

To illustrate my point I shall mention briefly one important class of workers in British Columbia, namely the loggers. These workers are often subject to what one might describe as a dual period of seasonality in respect of their employment. In some years loggers in British Columbia are subject to long periods of lay-off during the summer because of dry weather and the possibility of fires; and in such times they exhaust their rights to regular benefits under the act. Then, if it so happens that early in the year winter conditions develop, in many cases they find themselves unemployed prior to the Christmas period and prior to the end of the year, and thus ineligible to collect regular benefits. Undoubtedly it would be greatly beneficial to that group of workers if the period of supplementary benefits were advanced so as to commence at least as early as the middle of December.

On the other hand, reference was made by one hon. member to a suggestion in one of the labour organization briefs to the effect that in certain parts of Canada there was need for an extension of that period at least to May 1.

I believe we must recognize that there are regional climatic differences in Canada, and that in so far as unemployment is due to climatic conditions, and in so far as the application of supplementary benefits can be designed to cope with those conditions, the act should be designed so as to cover these periods of seasonality in unemployment resulting from climatic conditions. I can see no obstacle to an extension of benefits which would be related to regional climatic conditions. If it is desirable to extend the period in the prairie region so that it would apply to May 1, this might not be necessary in British Columbia or in the coastal area where, perhaps, the period of benefits might commence on December 15 and go through to the present termination date of April 15.

I would hope that the minister would indicate that such an extension is to be included in the bill that he proposes to introduce, following this resolution. I would hope that he would give us some explanation as to what consideration has been given to this important aspect of the application of supplementary benefits.

Mr. Pearkes: I will delay the passing of this resolution by no more than a minute but I should like to ask the minister whether consideration has been given to extending these benefits so that fishermen, and men who are connected with the fishing industry but who are not perhaps actual fishermen, may receive coverage. As the minister knows, there are certain companies which are engaged in the fishing industry and which employ a large number of men who are not actual fishermen in that they are not employed in the catching of fish but they are connected with the lifting of fish from various fish traps which are established legally in the strait of Juan de Fuca. I refer particularly to men who are employed in such companies as the Sooke Harbour Fishing and Packing Company as pile drivers, and men who are employed in the repair of the leads which guide the fish into their traps. These men are not fishermen in the ordinary sense of the word. They do not go out in boats to catch fish. They are employed in the fishing industry but they are very definitely tradesmen of another classification.

As I say, there are men who act as pile drivers. These men, working alongside the pile driver hired from another company that is covered, find that they are not covered by this insurance. Has further consideration been given to extending the coverage to this class of employees?

Mr. Starr: I fully realize that at this stage of the resolution to increase supplementary benefits a full-dress debate is not acceptable,