

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

regulation"—Mr. Chairman, to say that any administrative officer can know these things, for sure, is to lay claim to clairvoyance, at the very least, and certainly to adopt a sort of father-knows-best attitude. This is further attested to by the airy use of such claims as these: "that the regulation was justified was demonstrated", despite the fact demonstration did not hold water at all; and the further statement: "that the proportion would be even higher if the regulation were not in force to control unjustified claims."

All through this report there are phrases such as "controlling unjustified payments", and the like. Apparently if the commission knows that there are a substantial number of people claiming benefits, then those claims in their opinion are unjustified, and steps must be taken to place in the act the required legislative authority to take action against them.

I submit, further, that any statement that the larger percentage of claimants were married applies equally to men as to women for the reason that as they grow older they run greater risk of unemployment, unless they are in what I would refer to as the permanent employment classes. And, the older they get, the greater is the probability that they are married persons.

So to take the number of married women who have applied for benefits, and relate that number to the total of claims is unjust unless you are going to do exactly the same thing in respect of the claims received from male applicants. I would like to see what kind of position the commission would be in if they tried to bring in a similar rule against men, merely by reason of the fact that they were married.

There has been nothing yet produced that convinces me that this section is other than discriminatory. What about people who work in insurable employment all winter, and then collect benefits when the winter work is over, and work on farms during the summer where their jobs are not reported? What about them? There is no legislative action taken against them. What about people who work in unpleasant employment until such time as they have a sufficient number of contributions, and then live on their benefits until they run out? Nothing has been done about them.

Has any attempt been made at all to legislate against these? The answer is no; no attempt has been made. But because women as a group are peculiarly defenceless, and because they have no representation either on the commission or on the advisory committee, and rarely on boards of referees, it is comparatively easy for the administration to

legislate against them for the purpose of disqualification, whether justified or not.

Now, I am not pleading for those who make unjustifiable claims, if those claims are really unjustifiable. But I do say that the administrative officers of the commission have had plenty of opportunity and have had some experience in weeding out the proper from the improper claims. I do not think they require a blanket authority of this nature to make it easier for them.

Once again I ask that the minister reconsider the removal of this subclause. It is not enough to ask for a change in the regulation, as has been done in the fourth report. What is needed is that the clause be removed from the bill; and this we propose to ask at the appropriate time. I hope it will not be necessary to make this request, and that the minister, before that time comes, will indicate that, after reconsideration, he has decided to remove this subclause from the bill.

We have one further serious objection to the bill. This concerns a most important change which has been made. I refer to the reduction of the maximum benefit period from 51 weeks to 30 weeks. True enough, as I said a moment ago, in the report there is a clause which says that the committee further recommends that the government consider the advisability of increasing the period of maximum benefits beyond the 30 weeks provided in the bill.

There was some discussion in committee about this; and the hon. member for Spadina made a suggestion which seemed to meet with the approval of the minister and some members in the committee when he suggested that the maximum period of benefit might be altered from the 30 weeks, which was proposed, to a period of 36 weeks. We tried, but without success, to get them to put the period of 51 weeks back into the bill.

I should like to point out, Mr. Chairman, that the whole basis of payment of claims is that a person shall be, first of all, capable of and available for work; second, unable to obtain suitable employment. Then, of course, there is the requirement that he shall have a sufficient number of contributions to his credit to qualify.

During the course of consideration in committee a number of interesting points were brought up, and I should like to say in the house now, Mr. Chairman, what was said very well in the committee. I thought it might be well to repeat it. All of us who served on that committee had the very greatest admiration for the work that was done by the administrative officers of the