

Unemployment Insurance Act

has decreased and such workers are reluctant to take employment in agriculture due to the occupational discrimination in the Unemployment Insurance Act against employment in agriculture; and

Whereas, by reason of the facts hereinbefore recited, the small farmer must shrink his acreage and the operator of a large farm is harassed in his operations and expansion; and

Whereas, the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Unemployment Insurance Act in their report dated November 1962 recommend that the general principle be followed of extending coverage as broadly as possible for employees in agriculture so long as the necessary administrative procedures may be carried out to see to it that the rules of the plan are adhered to in a satisfactory fashion;

And this is where the amendment to the Unemployment Insurance Act is introduced:

An Act to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act.

Section 26 of the said Act is amended by adding thereto, immediately after subsection (3) thereof, the following subsection:

"(4) Notwithstanding anything in this act, the commission shall, with the approval of the governor in council, make regulations to include employment in agriculture in insurable employment and to provide for all such matters as are necessary to provide unemployment insurance for employees in agriculture.

Even if this bill is sponsored by a member of the opposition, it should get the unanimous approval of the house because it is important that our farmers, our settlers and our farm workers be treated on the same footing as other workers in any industry or in any economic sector, in Canada.

One of the things that the government should keep in mind is that a miner during his employment, makes a contribution, but it should not be forgotten that miners earn \$5,000 while farmers make only \$1,200. The small earners are exactly those who cannot get unemployment insurance benefits.

Now, if other categories of workers are entitled to unemployment insurance benefits, I sincerely believe that our farmers and settlers should be treated as fairly as any other category of workers in industry.

That is why I give my unqualified support to Bill No. C-59 and I hope that instead of giving it a first class burial at six o'clock, hon. members will have an opportunity to vote on it so that farmers can be treated just as fairly as the other social classes in this country.

[*English*]

Mr. H. A. Olson (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak very briefly on this bill because I believe that this is a matter which concerns the farmers in my riding, the

[Mr. Caouette.]

farmers in the riding of the hon. member who proposed the bill, as well as farmers all across Canada. There is no doubt about the suggestion that agricultural workers are not covered under the Unemployment Insurance Act and that this makes it difficult for farmers to obtain assistance for seeding, harvesting and other tasks. I do not want to be misunderstood, because there is no doubt in my mind that it would be desirable for the people who are engaged in the occupation of farming to be covered by unemployment insurance; but having said that I should like to state that I have some apprehension about the administration that would be necessary to make this possible.

I have had some experience in the small business field in complying with the terms of the Unemployment Insurance Act. I know, for example, that it is an offence for a small businessman to hire anyone unless he is licensed to buy unemployment insurance stamps. I know it is an offence if a small businessman does not purchase the stamps and place them in the unemployment insurance books within three days of the end of the month.

If the government does acquiesce to the requests contained in Bill C-59 I hope they will be extremely careful in setting up the regulations for the administration of this coverage; otherwise, on balance, this will be more of a millstone to the farmers across this country than it will be of assistance. It will require farmers hiring anyone to work for them to obtain a licence to purchase stamps, to keep records and supply the unemployment insurance office with those records. This could be more of a burden than anything else.

There may be a solution to the situation. I think the hon. member for Humboldt-Melfort-Tisdale (Mr. Rapp) pointed out the difficulties when he referred to the Gill commission, which suggested that it would be desirable to have agricultural workers covered under the act, provided the administrative details could be worked out. It is those details with which I am concerned, and I have had some experience in this small business field. I can well imagine that farmers will be unhappy when they find that they will be committing an offence by hiring someone without having a licence to purchase stamps, and unless they keep books, provide records, and so on.