

out consequent upon the unemployment after the end of hostilities. If I recollect rightly the benefits paid out in 1945 amounted to about \$14 million, or 17.5 per cent of the revenue of the fund for that year. That figure may be, and probably is, a bearable figure now, but for the first three months of 1946 one finds that over ninety per cent of the amounts paid into the fund were paid out in benefits to unemployed persons. We have a considerable amount of unemployment in the country at the present time. On May 3 I believe 210,000 people were unemployed, and that, of course, is too many. I do not think it can be denied that on occasions in the future this fund will be called upon to bear much heavier burdens than the amount paid out so far. Therefore the payment out of more than ninety per cent of the amounts paid in in the first three months is not a fact that one can quickly brush aside. I hope, and I know, that the minister is taking that into consideration and will project forward what will happen to the fund if such rates of payment are kept up.

When the minister made his statement yesterday he said the unemployment services which are set up under the bill will come under his immediate direction, whereas the operation of the fund itself remains entirely under the unemployment insurance commission. I believe it is proper that that should be so. I agree that he must have direct power in respect of the unemployment services. If the fund is to be kept on an actuarial and sound basis there is much point in its being handled by the unemployment commission, and not being subject to the day-by-day direction of the department administering the unemployment services.

I mention the question of suitable employment because it is there that a raid can be made upon the fund. If the time should ever come when persons would be kept on unemployment insurance when suitable jobs were available, then the fund could be quickly depleted. That would do great harm to those who are paying into it, and to those with bona fide cases of actual need, who are the persons for whom the fund was set up.

Although the minister has said that there are insurance officers in every district to handle these applicants, I did not gather whether they were officers of the unemployment insurance commission or of the Department of Labour, responsible to the minister; whether they took from the minister or from the commission itself the directions given to them for their guidance in deciding what is suitable employment. I hope he will make that point clear when he speaks in this debate.

What I have been saying is given strong support by a statement in the *Ottawa Journal* of recent date in which the deputy minister of labour is reported to have said with respect to the need for finding agricultural workers:

"We can place ten thousand workers on the land" said Mr. MacNamara, "and the bulk of those men with farm experience are now beginning to accept the inevitable in going to work."

Later, though this is not a direct quotation, the report states:

It had been the policy of the unemployment insurance commission "for some weeks" to cut off their benefits in cases where men refused work for which they were qualified.

That report gives rise to the question whether the unemployment insurance fund has been too liberally administered, and used in a way which ultimately would work against the people who now or in the future might have very real need for its assistance; and whether such a liberal policy could work against the possibility of an increase in the benefits payable without an increase in the rates as well. Certainly while I should be the last to wish to see the regulations or the act enforced in such a way as to harm anyone who finds himself out of work, I think the need to take care of the unemployed who have dependents must outweigh any notions of excessive liberality; and the quotations I have just read would lead one to believe that people who heretofore could have gone to work but did not wish to "accept the inevitable" have not been required so to do. Indeed in the second quotation the actual words "refused work" appear. So I hope the minister will make a further statement on this matter of suitable employment, and indicate whether or not it is within his power, or the power of the unemployment insurance commission, or both, to determine what is suitable employment at any particular time, whether these insurance officers come under the commission or under the minister or under both, and what authority issues to them their instructions.

Again, it seems to me very important to have an understanding of what is meant by "a reasonable time" in section 31, dealing with the entitlement to continuing benefit after being on the roll for some time, there being no suitable work of the kind to which a person has been accustomed. After a reasonable time one must accept employment of some other type for which one is fitted; and I think the construction of that word might be explained with some benefit. I want to emphasize that my remarks on this point are made in the desire to see the benefits increased, particularly to those with dependents, and are