

Valley with crops such as broccoli, strawberries and raspberries, it should also work for us in southern Ontario with our grape picking, tobacco harvesting, and so on.

• (1520)

In addition to being very low-paid and having most insecure jobs, which causes difficulty in plugging themselves into the system—at least this is the experience of my constituents, many of whom are immigrants—they are discriminated against in terms of unemployment insurance because they cannot qualify for benefits.

I do not claim that all farm labour contractors are exploitive. They are not. They perform a good service for some of these people. But a person should not be faced with having to work for a farm contractor because otherwise he will not receive unemployment insurance. They should have the choice of working either for an individual farmer or for a farm labour contractor.

At the moment Section 16 of the regulations forbids this. If a farm worker goes to work for two weeks for farmer A and then two weeks for farmer B, he does not have the necessary 25 qualifying days. Therefore, he is not eligible for unemployment insurance. When that farm worker is laid off, as all of them are because this work is seasonal, he collects no benefits even though he has to pay the premiums. That is blatantly unfair.

This is not a new problem. It goes back two years, if not longer. It is at least two years that I know of, but the situation has become so bad that farm workers, like the lettuce and the grape harvesters in California, have formed a union. We hear people say there are too many unions and that unions are too strong. But unions come about because people are forced to bargain collectively in order to look after themselves. A farm workers' union has developed in the Fraser Valley. It will grow as it has in California and elsewhere, because there must be some way of fighting for rights collectively. You would think that people would have to fight a big, rotten and inflexible bureaucracy in order to change the act. That is only half right. They do not have to fight to change the act. The regulation is all that needs changing, and that can be done by order in council. That is all that is required to right what I think is a wrong which should not be perpetuated.

The farming season is nearly upon us, and there is no protection or relief for these people. If there is a Liberal philosophy which is: do what we have to and do only when we have to, and if there is more to it than that—and I see the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin), who is the acting Prime Minister, is nodding approvingly—surely a simple change by order in council is not beyond the ability of the government and a process which would not take long.

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): After all, there are more than 3,000 orders in council each year.

Mr. Rose: This is not the first time I have mentioned this matter. On December 8, when the Christmas spirit pervaded all our hearts, including, presumably, those who govern—

Mr. Anguish: Including the Liberals?

Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971 (No. 2)

Mr. Rose:—I rose under the provisions of Standing Order 43 and said this:

In contrast to other workers like plumbers and carpenters, Section 16 of the Unemployment Insurance Act denies farm workers all unemployment insurance credit for the days worked unless they work 25 days for the same employer. Thus, over 100,000 farm workers among Canada's poorest paid workers who are not normally covered by minimum wage legislation, health and safety protection, or workers' compensation benefits, are victims of unemployment insurance discrimination which can force these workers into the arms of labour contractors who can, by moving workers from job to job, employ farm workers for the season for a fee of sometimes up to 40 per cent of their already low wages.

I moved then that we change this regulation because it is only right and just to do so.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we support the extension of the bill. We want to see it go through all its stages today. We think this is important. We look forward to improvements when the act is changed. But we are not all that optimistic about improvements in the Unemployment Insurance Act. Our experience has been just the reverse. Cutbacks have occurred and the poor have been blamed for the failure of the government's economic policy. I could certainly speak on that topic as well. However, I will not do so today. I will leave the House, I hope, with a very determined wish, supported, I think, by all fair-minded people, that we scrap Section 16 of the Unemployment Insurance Act regulations and start treating people who work in the agricultural industry on a seasonal basis as decently as we treat other people who work in our society and who have more protection.

Mr. W. C. Scott (Victoria-Haliburton): Mr. Speaker, when I spoke to the hon. member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie) yesterday about this bill, he said it was the wish of our party that this bill receive speedy passage through the House. We all agreed on that and we agreed that we would keep our remarks brief. I am sure this was also the wish of the minister. Today, however, the government House leader made a very lengthy interjection, and I am sure other members were involved, which puzzled us. Nevertheless, hundreds of thousands of Canadians are affected by this legislation, and all of us should see to it that this bill pass.

I am, however, critical of the minister for waiting until the eleventh hour to introduce this bill. This legislation needs many amendments. Probably the minister agrees, but the point was agreed on years ago, yet here we are with a bill that has to be passed in all stages today to enable the unemployed in Canada to receive instead of what should be a paycheque some form of assistance.

I am very critical of the bill, and there are many sections of it which should be discussed. Many amendments should be made. I am sure every Member of Parliament has constituents phoning daily saying that they cannot get their unemployment insurance or their maternity benefits. We should also be dealing with the point raised by the hon. member for Nepean-Carleton (Mr. Baker) concerning adoptive parenthood regulations and benefits. This is something which certainly needs attention. This bill should be more creative and should stimulate people to work instead of merely passing out unemployment insurance cheques to them just to enable them to make ends meet. We should be striving to provide something more