

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

of too narrow a view by claimants and possibly the administration as to the types of employment that constitute "suitable employment" in any individual case; (d) the failure by some claimants to disclose earnings during weeks of partial unemployment; (e) the failure by some claimants to disclose the true facts concerning their availability for employment; and (f) collusion between employers and employees in failing to give adequate information respecting the reasons for termination.

These abuses have gone on for years. Anyone in this country engaged in business in a minor way soon runs up against the Unemployment Insurance Act, and all the abuses that have gone on for years and years. They are well known and when members of parliament discuss them with constituents they can only say, "Well, it is not right, but that is what is going on." The act is of no help to our economy.

The Gill committee says, if I may paraphrase the contents of pages 128 and 129 of the report, that many who receive benefits equal to 90 per cent of their insured wage may prefer to remain unemployed instead of taking a job.

In recent years unemployment insurance has been extended to cover the fishing industry, and other seasonal industries. It has moved into the field of agriculture. But has that extension of coverage helped farmers to get farm workers? It has not. In my province the livestock industry is a major agricultural industry, and to make a ranch pay one has to work at it for 12 months of the year. The Unemployment Insurance Act, as it is now administered, does not fit the needs of that industry. It was a mistake to make unemployment insurance compulsory in agriculture. It would have been better to make unemployment insurance payable on a voluntary basis. But, oh no; the government said that the act would apply to farmers and ranchers, and no consideration to the agricultural industry was given. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Greene) said, at a meeting that I attended, that payments to the fund could not be made on a voluntary basis because that would be a departure from the insurance aspect of the scheme. I can only say that we departed from that a long time ago.

I would be the first to endorse a return to an insurance scheme. The Gill committee suggests that there should be an insurance scheme—and I emphasize the word "insurance"—for those who are in insurable industries and that there should be some other scheme for those who are affected by winter or seasonal unemployment. The livestock industry would go along with that.

In Canada today, to have a paying ranch, two men must work at it. Usually a rancher would hire one man. To have a paying dairy farm the farmer must hire two men. At least two extra people must work on the dairy farm in order to make it pay and in order to let the farmer and his employees enjoy a standard of life comparable to the standard of other Canadians.

Ranching and dairy farms are competitive businesses. The potato industry is seasonal. One of the great problems in agriculture is getting hired help. I asked the Minister of Agriculture some time ago in a committee if he was making any specific request of the Department of Manpower and Immigration with regard to the immigration of hired agricultural help, and he said that he had not thought of it. That was two years ago, and though I have reminded the government periodically of the basic problems facing the agricultural industry, the Department of Manpower and Immigration has apparently failed to act.

How will this affect the agricultural industry? Regardless of whether a farmer or a rancher thinks that insurance coverage is necessary for his employee, he will have to pay into the fund. There will be nothing voluntary about it. A man can get benefits, not only if he has been fired, but if he quits his job and cannot get another so-called suitable job. And here, this bill raises the maximum benefit to \$53 a week. I do not know what the going agricultural wage is across Canada but I bet that few farmers can afford to pay much more than \$53 a week, which comes to a little over \$200 a month. Few can afford to pay that for winter employment, though in fall and spring the wheat industry of Saskatchewan and Alberta can pay more than that, especially when crops are good, markets are available and prices are close to today's prices.

● (5:20 p.m.)

We are reaching a very dangerous situation by increasing benefits under the Unemployment Insurance Act. If the increase were accompanied by changes in the regulations I do not think the agricultural industry would object, nor do I think I would object. But under the present proposals there is to be no change in the regulations at all, to speak of, and no account is taken of the recommendations outlined by the Gill committee. No definite tour is set for winter collection of unemployment insurance.