

Unemployment Insurance

either find a solution for these problems, or we must in fact admit defeat and the justice of the criticism so often levelled against the system of free enterprise.

I am encouraged in my view that a solution will be found by the statistics which I obtained while the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) was speaking. During the half century between 1850 and 1900, when industrial development was first taking place on a modern and major scale, there were six depressions totalling 195 months. In the fifty-year period from 1900 to 1950 there were periods of depression, but the number was reduced to five and totalled 102 months. I should like to see the unemployment situation met with a declaration of government policy in regard to trade. After all, a considerable proportion of unemployment is due to the fact that our markets have been lost within the last year and a half. What has the government to say? What is its plan? I should like to see an over-all trade plan enunciated instead of a piecemeal plan for unemployment. What legislation is to be placed before this house to increase jobs and employment? Men and women out of work are not asking for unemployment insurance, except as a temporary measure. They are asking for jobs.

Surely this house has the right to know whether the government intends to bring in a plan of public works such as the development of irrigation plans to increase productivity and assure the certainty of production. I know of no better time than the present one, with incipient unemployment as evident as it is, for the commencement in this country of irrigation developments such as the one envisaged in the South Saskatchewan river development plan; and there are many others. Three years ago I asked the appropriate minister: What are the government plans when unemployment comes? Two years ago I asked: When the Marshall plan ceases to operate, what were the government plans? Parliament is in the dark, as it has been during the past several years, as to what if anything the government intends to do in order to provide jobs through the establishment and inauguration of public development schemes. Surely parliament has the right to know what plans, if any, the government has, and what is to be done to meet unemployment where it is not seasonal. It would be most helpful if, in addition to the very complete statement of the Minister of National Health and Welfare with regard to these amendments, the government had also placed before the house its over-all plans, its ideas and its conception of what must be done in order to

assure employment and to put back to work the half million who are unemployed in this country.

I come now to one further matter, and I bring it to the attention of the minister. The act is being amended. These amendments reveal a very adroit manner or plan to increase contributions, namely, by raising the level of the salary limit from \$3,120 to \$4,800. That is a novel and indirect taxation of those with salaries over \$3,120. It brings in 90,000 other workers, most of whom in that salary list are executives. Certainly those with salaries over \$4,000 are mainly executives. It provides a system whereby another tax will be imposed to meet the extra costs of the proposed amendments.

In view of the fact that 90,000 more are going to contribute, may I suggest to the minister an additional amendment to the existing law. I am asking hon. members in other parts of the house to join me in this. The law now provides for unemployment insurance benefits being paid under the following conditions. Section 27, subsection 1, reads:

Every person who, being insured under this act, proves that he is

- (a) unemployed;
- (b) capable of and available for work; and
- (c) unable to obtain suitable employment, . . . be entitled to receive payments.

There are men and women everywhere who have paid unemployment insurance contributions over the years, and who finally as a result of illness striking them are unemployed. These people are denied unemployment insurance benefits. I have one instance in mind of an employee of a railroad who was employed for 17 years. During the period that he could contribute since the act was in effect he contributed to unemployment insurance. A year ago he was stricken with an incurable disease. He is not entitled to unemployment insurance for the contributions that he has made. The only persons who are entitled are those unemployed who are "capable of and available for work". Now that the act is being revamped would it not be possible to add, as those who should be entitled to receive benefits under this act, such persons who having contributed for the requisite number of months, are by reason of accident or disease unable to work, and therefore are not capable of or available for work? They should be included as eligible and qualified for entitlement.

I know another man who has contributed since 1941. Six weeks ago that man became disabled but not as a result of accident, and therefore does not come within the provisions of the Workmen's Compensation Act. That man has nothing to look forward to but fear,