

*Supply—Labour*

**Mr. Pickersgill:** Mr. Chairman, first of all I should like to say that I endorse completely everything that my hon. friend from Burin-Burgeo has said about unemployment insurance for fishermen. I do think that this apparently concerted publicity campaign by some people in more favoured and protected industries against the fishing industry is one of the most unwarranted and unfair things that I have seen in a long time. I am very grateful to the minister for his intervention in the debate to indicate that he agreed with us about that. After all, this is an industry that has to stand on its own feet. And worse than that, it competes without any subsidy in world markets against half a dozen countries where the fisheries exports are subsidized. The fishermen have to buy in a protected market. I will not elaborate the argument which was made very well by my hon. friend from Burin-Burgeo; but there are one or two particular observations that I should like to make very briefly about the administration of unemployment insurance, particularly unemployment insurance for fishermen, but not exclusively that. It is much more the administration, generally speaking, in remote areas where it has to be done largely by mail.

But before I do that, in view of some of the extraordinary history we have heard this afternoon, I should like to say how proud we are on this side of the house that it was a Liberal government that, after struggling for three years against the Tory premier of Quebec, and finally getting him defeated, was able to bring unemployment insurance on a constitutional basis into operation in this country. All the improvements that have been made in this legislation over the years, except one or two that have been suggested very recently that we do not think were improvements, were also attributable to a Liberal government.

Having said that, I come back to one or two of the small flies in the ointment, and a very good ointment it is, too. The first thing I should like to say is something that I thought would have melted the heart of the minister long before this. I have written him on several occasions, as he will recall, about cases where young men who had got enough stamps to get unemployment insurance were denied unemployment insurance because they went back to school. Now, I do think, this is the kind of provision that gets put into legislation in prosperous times. It is quite obvious that in times of full employment unemployment insurance is not intended to be used as a kind of income while someone completes his education; but it does seem to me that in times when unemployment is great and employment is slack it is a terrible social waste to say that because

a young man goes to school instead of hanging around at home when there is no work available, his unemployment insurance is cut off. I am sure that this would not require—I should not say “I am sure” because I am not a lawyer and I have not examined the act carefully—I very much doubt whether this would require any amendment to the act; I think it would merely require an amendment to the regulations. I appeal to the minister once again to take these cases under consideration, and not merely to take them under consideration but to get his colleagues to act and do something about them because it is hard to think of anything more wasteful than saying to these young men, “you have to stay out of school in order to get your unemployment insurance; if you go to school you have no right to unemployment insurance.” This happens, of course, more often in a seasonal occupation such as fishing, perhaps, than in some others.

The other difficulty I mentioned the other day and I should like to reiterate it. It is this. There is a very strong feeling about this, and I think it is a justified feeling about placement disabilities. As I said, I do not want to criticize the officials because I have nothing but praise for the officials with whom I have anything to do. I think they are doing their best; but in a province like Newfoundland there is a real problem because of the poor communications and the great distances from the offices. There is unquestionably a tendency when jobs become available to give them to those people who are handy to the offices rather than to others who, though they may have been unemployed a great deal longer, are more remote from the offices. I do not say that the ones that are remote should get preference over the others, not at all, but it does seem to me that in some way or other there should be equality in a matter of this kind. I hope that the minister will give the matter some consideration and will get his officials to give some consideration to trying to work it out.

I also want to appeal again to the minister to have more peregrinating officials in provinces like Newfoundland. It is a very great problem to explain things by letter. I have received a lot of letters, as the minister knows, and I have sent a few to him. I have also sent a lot to the chief commissioner who has always been most considerate with any of these letters and has gone to a lot of trouble over them. But it is very hard for many people to understand and explain all the complications that arise as between seasonal benefits and regular benefits and the number of stamps that are required and it does happen at times that mistakes are made quite inadvertently in the offices. That is why, when