

Unemployment Insurance Act

If we consider that the figures supplied to us are based on a five year period during which there would be good and bad years, it cannot be taken for granted that the initial year, when the winter will be as in former years, will call for less withdrawals from the fund than were made last winter.

According to figures appearing in table no. 3—

(Text):

The excess of expenses over revenue for the year, \$227,948,740—

(Translation):

That means that if the Minister of Labour has to face an unemployment situation similar to that which prevailed last winter, and if we consider that, according to statistics, there were 585,409 unemployed in Canada last May, we will have to draw enormous amounts on the unemployment insurance fund next winter, as we pointed out last year, when, unfortunately, this government did not want to listen to us. As a matter of fact, if we have to spend amounts larger than the intake of \$248 million, it will mean that, considering the present condition of the fund, and if we have to levy further amounts to pay those benefits, there will be hardly anything left in the unemployment insurance fund. The government will then have to restore the balance of the unemployment insurance fund by depositing into it a certain amount taken from the consolidated revenue account. Why then does not the government decide today to replenish the unemployment insurance fund out of consolidated revenue, thus leaving the unemployment insurance contribution rate at the same level as before the introduction of the amendments now considered?

We then could have a committee consider the Unemployment Insurance Act and submit a well prepared and serious report which we might accept or reject on the strength of some specific argument.

The bill is based on contingencies, on possibilities that are pointed out to us. We are told that the bill was prepared on the basis of a five year average. Now, if we take the average figure for the last five years, we find that, as far as unemployment insurance is concerned, there were quite a few variations with regard to the amounts spent during that period. As a matter of fact, they amounted to \$186 million in 1954, to \$257 million in 1955 and to \$250 million in 1956. In 1957, they reached \$231 million; in 1958, \$385 million and in 1959, \$478,000,676. This means that, far from decreasing, they were steadily on the increase.

[Mr. Caron.]

Then, as we do not know what next winter keeps in store for us, instead of submitting an imperfect bill, one that workers cannot accept because they are asked to make too large sacrifices for something which will benefit the whole Canadian people the government should, during the present session, submit a winter works program in order to lessen unemployment and relieve municipalities which have once more to contend with all the legislation passed by the government. Municipalities will have to shoulder the main burden of unemployment, while the government will wash its hands like Pilate did before Jesus.

I maintain, Mr. Chairman, that the government has no right to act in this way. Once more I urge it to stop and think before taking a course which the whole people of Canada, with the exception of Conservative members, are asking it not to take.

(Text):

Mr. Martin (Timmins): Mr. Chairman, I do not propose to speak very long on this matter today, but I would like to know if the minister could answer a couple of questions. Unfortunately I was away from the house yesterday when he explained what happened with regard to the letter I received that day. At page 4846 of *Hansard* the minister said that, unfortunately, inadvertently some of these bulletins were placed in the mail last week.

Mr. Chairman, as I stated this letter was dated June 12, and the writer states that the office where she is employed received bulletin No. 20 a week or more ago, which puts it back at least as far as June 5. She also states the bulletin was under date of June 1, 1959. Therefore it appears that it was more than a week ago that this bulletin No. 20 was placed in the mail, which does not exactly conform with what the minister said yesterday. I wonder if the hon. gentleman could explain it a little more fully.

Mr. Starr: I inquired into this immediately, and I read the words exactly as reported to me in this regard; that inadvertently a small number of these bulletins, because of a mistake by one of the civil servants working in the commission, were put into the mail bag. I must accept that. I feel we are all human, and if this civil servant made a mistake it is regrettable, but I am not going to try to punish him for it.

Mr. Peters: Could I ask a question on that point? Would the minister not agree that this information could not have been prepared and should not have been prepared before the committee reported? The committee did not