

Unemployment Insurance Act

employment. From personal experience I know that many losses have been incurred by farmers for the simple reason that they could not obtain workers. These workers have eventually drifted into the cities where they, although not always in a position to obtain permanent work, are at least in a position to obtain a few months work, are able to contribute under the Unemployment Insurance Act and thus receive unemployment insurance benefits when they are out of work.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to see this motion come to a vote. As I said at the outset, I have brought this matter to the attention of the house in many other sessions. Nevertheless, the time is now ripe for these people to be brought under the Unemployment Insurance Act. I will not make any further comments on my resolution because I know many hon. members from the western provinces and from the provinces of Quebec and Ontario are also very interested in seeing the implementation of the proposal contained in my motion, which is to bring seasonal farm labourers under the Unemployment Insurance Act.

Mr. H. E. Gray (Essex West): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise and support the principle of the motion put before us by the hon. member who just spoke. The hon. member for Assiniboia (Mr. Argue) happens to be attending the convention of the farmers' union in Winnipeg. I know that if it had been possible for him to be here this afternoon he would have joined me in speaking out strongly in support of the principle of this motion. I would like to point out to this house that the agricultural policy of the Liberal party contains this statement:

Unemployment insurance should be extended to as many farm workers as possible.

It would probably be correct to say that there is hardly an area in Canada today where farmers have not experienced a certain difficulty in getting and keeping good quality seasonal workers because they cannot offer these workers unemployment insurance coverage. They therefore are bound to lose out in competition with other employers who can offer such coverage. Mr. Speaker, let me give you an example from my own riding of Essex West.

(Translation):

My riding includes the areas of La Salle and River Canard where we find truck gardeners—most of them French speaking—who grow vegetables and early products such as the famous Petite Cote onions and radishes.

Most of the forefathers of those farmers settled on the shores of the Detroit river some 200 years ago. Many of them want their

seasonal workers to benefit from unemployment insurance.

(Text):

They begin work as early as the middle of April. The market gardeners of La Salle and River Canard can keep seasonal workers busy almost up to the end of November, but they have great difficulty in getting and keeping good quality seasonal workers because they cannot obtain unemployment insurance for them. The result is that as soon as some work comes along that is covered by unemployment insurance—for example in the canning factories—the seasonal help they would like to keep leave and go into this other type of employment. I have been told by some market gardeners in my riding that their workers have actually come to them and asked for unemployment insurance coverage; they have asked whether the farmers themselves could get stamps to put in their books. It was with great regret that these farmers could not do what the seasonal workers asked them to do.

Mr. Speaker, it seems rather strange that today fishermen are covered, but not seasonal farm workers. I suggest it is time this anomaly was removed. It seems rather strange that men who harvest the products of the sea can get unemployment insurance benefits, but not men who harvest the products of the land. If we look at the regulations we find that certain employments in agriculture now qualify for unemployment insurance coverage. May I refer briefly, Mr. Speaker, to regulation 58, which states:

A person's employment shall be insurable, though otherwise excepted as being in agriculture, if it is in connection with any of the following undertakings:

- (a) breeding or raising poultry,
 - (b) chick hatching,
 - (c) preparation and marketing of poultry,
 - (d) egg grading, or
 - (e) breeding or raising race horses, saddle horses or light harness horses,
- unless the undertaking is carried on as an incidental part of farming operations.

I wonder why a horse jockey can get coverage but not a tractor jockey. Here is something which I believe should be changed. It may be that the way to deal with this matter is to cover only certain classes of seasonal farm workers such as those engaged in market gardening, or perhaps it should be done on a voluntary basis. But I think this could be worked out, once we sit down in committee. Therefore, since I strongly urge that this motion be allowed to go to a vote, I shall not take the time of the house further, except to urge that this motion be supported by all members this afternoon.