

*Supply—Labour*

I would ask these people to examine their consciences collectively and individually before they continue pointing fingers at the fisherman. If they are honest with themselves I believe they will come to the conclusion that they themselves by their own actions in laying off men unnecessarily have put a far greater drain on the fund than that represented by all the fishermen who may draw benefits for many years to come.

While on this subject I should like to remind the minister that we were promised some time ago that the part of the act which applies to fishermen's benefits would be revised. We have not heard from the minister concerning when he expects to do something about this. He must know now that there are serious inequities in the way the act is administered and that some revision is long overdue. As the act stands at present some fishermen can never draw benefits because their greatest period of activity is during the winter season and the stamps they earn at that time cannot be counted for benefits during the slack period of the fishing season. I hope the minister will be able to assure us that the government does intend to overhaul this legislation and revise that part of the act which relates to unemployment insurance benefits for fishermen.

Last year I made several suggestions to the minister about the administration of unemployment insurance benefits. As I went about my district I was glad to observe that the minister took some of my suggestions seriously and put them into effect which fact was very much appreciated by the fishermen.

I should like to elaborate now on a suggestion that I made a few days ago to the minister about people who pay into the fund for five consecutive years without drawing any benefits at all. I suggested that there should be a maximum period for people who are never going to be out of work and who pay continuously all throughout their working life. I should like to amplify that by citing the case of a foreman. It is often the case that a foreman starts out on an hourly wage rate and after a few years is transferred to a salary basis. His income then rises above the level which permits him to continue coverage under this act. I am told that in such cases his insurance book is valid for only 90 days after his transfer to salary. Should he get out of work he cannot receive any benefits at all from the contributions that he has paid in for five years. That seems to me to be very unfair.

**Mr. Starr:** May I just give this information? The stamps and book are good for two years.

[Mr. Carter.]

**Mr. Carter:** Are good for two years after the man has transferred to salary?

**Mr. Starr:** Yes.

**Mr. Carter:** Or after his salary rises above the permissible level of income?

**Mr. Starr:** That is correct.

**Mr. Carter:** I am very glad to have that information because it is not generally known. I am also told that after the two-year period expires and this man gets laid off and has to be re-employed at an hourly wage rate he has to start all over again and build up his contributions from scratch.

**Mr. Starr:** May I interject again? I personally paid into the fund for 10 years and I was very happy that I did not have to collect anything from the fund, and that time has expired.

**Mr. Carter:** I am glad that the minister was able to pay into the fund for 10 years, but the minister was fortunate enough not to be laid off and have to look for work. I would point out to the minister that when a person is out of work it does not matter too much whether he is on an hourly rate or on a salary rate; his need is just as great and there should be some coverage. Therefore, I would suggest to the minister that he should take another look at this five-year period to see whether something more equitable could not be worked out for people who have paid for a full five years or seven years, or whatever the minister or his advisers may decide, and give them some special consideration.

Before I sit down there is just one other point I want to bring to the minister's attention. It arises from the experiences which I have encountered from a number of my constituents. The applicant in an isolated community, particularly in my province, has to send his application in by mail. Now, his application can be lost in the mail. It can also be received in the office and be mislaid by some of the commission's employees. In both of these cases the applicant must prove, and must very often go to considerable inconvenience to prove, that he actually sent in his application. Some discretion should be given to the managers of the offices in the various regions in such cases because, it seems to me, the applicant has no protection if a clerk in the office loses his book. All he has to say is, "Well, I did not get it; it was not received". The poor applicant is put to untold inconvenience. The postmaster may mislay it or it can get lost in the mail somewhere and the applicant has to suffer the whole burden of the inconvenience. I do hope that some way can be worked out under which the benefit of the doubt can be given to cases such as these.