

and many thousands more are on the border line, receiving only temporary or seasonal employment. What steps is the government going to take to guarantee economic security for those people?

We come now to another point. Many classes of our workers are not usually included in unemployment insurance schemes. Agriculturists, fishermen, lumbermen, those employed in domestic service, nurses, teachers and many others are usually excluded from the benefits of unemployment insurance. Those people, because of increased prices, increased taxes and the higher cost of living, will be obliged to pay their share of a contributory unemployment insurance scheme, just the same as the rest.

Agriculturists constitute one glaring example. About fifty per cent of our people are on farms. Those citizens, if they are excluded, will have to pay their share of the cost; yet they will not be able to participate in the benefits.

In conclusion, if a plan is to be introduced which will really assist our Canadian people, it must be one which will assist all classes. It must be a plan which will better the living conditions of the people of Canada, rather than make them poorer. Because the wording of the resolution does not make it quite plain that such a scheme should be available to all classes, and because the word "contributory" will make it *ultra vires* of the constitution and will give the government an excuse for not going ahead with any scheme. I propose the following amendment to the resolution, seconded by the hon. member for Kindersley (Mr. Elliott):

That the resolution be amended as follows: That the words "contributory unemployment insurance for" be struck out and the following be substituted "non-contributory unemployment insurance available to all classes in."

Mr. RODOLPHE LEDUC (Wright) (Translation): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Neill) on having placed on the order paper the following resolution:

That in the opinion of this house, a national system of contributory unemployment insurance for Canada is a pressing need at the present time and should receive immediate attention.

He has thus provided many hon. members with an opportunity to express their views on a question of such great present-day interest as unemployment insurance.

It is impossible to discuss this question without at the same time discussing the question of amending the British North America Act, for the dominion government cannot establish compulsory unemployment insurance on a national basis in this country without amending the Canadian constitution.

I shall deal first with unemployment insurance itself and then with the necessity of amending the Canadian constitution in order to permit the establishment of unemployment insurance on a national basis.

Unemployment insurance is a form of protection given to the worker who has been employed during a certain number of months of the year and who has contributed to the unemployment insurance fund. It allows him when unemployed to draw benefits from the common fund to which he has contributed.

In other words, unemployment insurance means compulsory saving. It is well known that a large proportion of workers spend their wages from day to day, making no provision for periods of sickness or unemployment.

The proposed system of compulsory and contributory unemployment insurance involves a common fund made up of contributions by the wage-earner, the employer and, in many instances, the State, out of which fund the former draws benefits during periods of forced idleness.

It is recognized by our sociologists and economists that not only is legislation of that kind praiseworthy, but that it is important to put it into force as soon as possible in order partially to solve the problem of unemployment and particularly of direct relief.

Time does not permit me to describe the operation of the various systems of unemployment insurance applied in different countries. I shall simply say that I am convinced of the necessity and urgency of establishing a system of unemployment insurance in Canada, and that I deem it the government's duty to take all means necessary to obtain the consent of the provinces to a constitutional amendment on that point. Indeed, such an amendment is essential if the dominion government is to establish in Canada a nation-wide system of contributory unemployment insurance.

The British North America Act is not a contract, but an Imperial act which can be amended only by the Imperial Parliament.

Our federal system differs from the American one in that the Fathers of the Canadian Confederation insisted on a powerful central authority, while the American federation strengthens the powers of the States. Therefore, in the United States all undistributed powers belong to the parts that make up the whole. In Canada they belong to the federal parliament.

Lord Carnarvon stated in the House of Lords when introducing the British North America Act:

The object in view is to confer on the central government its high functions and almost sovereign powers, enabling it to establish general