

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

Mr. MERRITT: In other words, the advance can be made without reference to some other office?

Mr. MITCHELL: Yes.

Mr. MERRITT: I think that is a very good provision, which undoubtedly will do a great deal to relieve the situation.

Mr. MITCHELL: I should like to make a point, if I may. The man must have his book with him, you understand.

Mr. MERRITT: Yes, that would be necessary. I suppose the commission will take steps to let people know the importance of having their books with them, in view of this provision. I repeat that I am sure this will be very useful in relieving the situation in Vancouver.

The next question is the one asked by the hon. member for Peterborough West. Will the minister tell the committee whether it would be possible to reduce the nine-day period to six days, as suggested by the hon. member? A reduction of this kind would take the responsibility for unemployment relief further off the shoulders of the municipality and private agencies, and would be a great help.

My last question—perhaps the minister can deal with these two at once—is whether he will make a statement on what can be done under the Unemployment Insurance Act or by his department to relieve the strain on a municipality caused by a seasonal influx of unemployed persons?

Mr. MITCHELL: As to the first question my hon. friend raises, I have had it looked into by the actuaries, and they think it would be too great a strain on the fund on the present basis. I consider it fair to say that unemployment conditions being as they are, I do not think nine days is too long. Take a single fellow in Regina, Calgary, Edmonton or Winnipeg who picks up stakes and goes to Vancouver. A waiting period of nine days is no hardship, in my judgment, if that fellow has been steadily employed.

The other question is more difficult. The hon. member spoke of the migration to the west coast.

Mr. MERRITT: Yes, though I understand it takes place in other cities as well.

Mr. MITCHELL: I may tell my hon. friend I should like to live in Burrard myself during the winter.

Mr. MERRITT: We should like to have you.

[Mr. Mitchell.]

Mr. MITCHELL: But someone has to stay in the cold climate and produce some of the wealth, though you understand I am not suggesting that you do not produce your share in British Columbia. It is like the birds, and you will remember the story about the sea-gulls in Victoria. The birds like to fly south for the winter, and under ordinary conditions those of us who can afford it like to go south as well. There is not much difference between that and a fellow jumping on a freight or getting on a train and going to Vancouver or Victoria. That is one of the penalties you have to pay for living in that sublime climate; and it would not be so bad if you did not brag so much about it. In that case perhaps fewer people would want to go there.

Mr. CASE: We might have the first two months of the session out there.

Mr. MITCHELL: Yes, of course.

Mr. KNOWLES: Be careful; there are a couple of by-elections being held out there.

Mr. MITCHELL: We will be there, too. I have watched that movement for a good many years. We have advised against it. We did so last fall, and I think it was the hon. member for Cape Breton South who spoke of the power my department and particularly the minister had under selective service. I believe in the basic principles of freedom. While it may be logical to push people around in war-time when men and women are in uniform and there is a tremendous shortage of labour, I question the wisdom of telling anyone he cannot go anywhere he likes in this country on his own responsibility.

In my quieter moments during the war period I often used to say to myself that I hoped all the "shalls" and "dos" and "don'ts" I had to enforce then would not impair the basic freedom of the Canadian people. It is so easy to slip into a form of what might be called dictatorship, though some people call it planned economy, to make it sound good. I think it is a dangerous thing for the state to have the right over a long period of time to move people around against their will, so that young people in the formative stage will come to take it for granted. That can lead to only one thing.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Communism.

Mr. MERRITT: I never suggested that the minister should direct labour or anything like that. His analogy of the bird was a nice one, but what we are concerned with is who keeps the bird's nest, and we would much prefer