

Unemployment Insurance Act

was long discussion on that matter. I pointed out to the standing committee, as I should now like to point out to the committee of the whole, that the commission and the government feel that the amendments that have been put forward here—both those affecting the regular benefits and those affecting the seasonal benefits—are such an increase over those in the old act that we have gone as far as it is safe to go.

It is impossible to look into the future. As was said earlier today, it depends upon the economic setting in which we find ourselves. I for one do not look upon the future with pessimism either with regard to employment or any other feature of our national life; but even at the best we shall continue to have seasonal employment if we have none of the other kind. After discussing this matter with my colleagues following presentation of this recommendation, I am now prepared to ask my colleague the Minister of Agriculture to move the following amendment:

That paragraph (a) of subclause (1) of clause 48 be amended by deleting the word "thirty" in line 3 and substituting therefor the word "thirty-six".

That would make it possible, not in every case but in some cases, for the unemployed worker to obtain 36 weeks' regular benefits plus a maximum of 15 weeks' seasonal benefits, bringing the total to 51 weeks.

Mr. Knowles: Provided it came at the right time of the year.

Mr. Gardiner: I so move.

Mrs. Fairclough: Mr. Chairman, as I said this morning in commenting on this particular point, it must be borne in mind that the additional 15 weeks' seasonal benefit would apply equally to the period of 51 weeks as to the present proposal of 36 weeks, or the period of 30 weeks originally in the bill. It must be borne in mind also that the seasonal benefits applied under the act regardless of the fact that the claimant might have had a full period of 51 weeks. I recognize that the government are willing to make some concession in this regard. Undoubtedly this is a step in the right direction, but if they could have been wrong to this extent they could have been wrong to the extent of the former reduction, and they could still be wrong to the extent that quite probably the proper term is 51 weeks.

I do not feel that anything has been proved and, as the minister has admitted, we really do not know what will be the effect of this. It is a matter of wait and see. In my estimation the three-year transitional period has been put in the bill for the express purpose of waiting to see, and I feel very strongly

[Mr. Gregg.]

that the 51-week period should still be in the bill. It is not going to alter the working of the act as long as the transitional period is there, except for the newer group of claimants.

With respect to anyone who is covered by the act now and who has built up a period of benefits that would entitle him to the former maximum, he will be protected for a short time. But the day is going to come—and three years slip by very quickly—when that protection will be taken from him and similar protection will not be afforded to the newer claimants. I had hoped that the minister would go further than this, despite the fact it was rather apparent this was a suggestion that came from the government itself when it was made in the standing committee. I point out, however, that there will be still one more opportunity for the minister to go even further, and when that next opportunity presents itself I still urge the minister very strongly to go the full way of the 51 weeks. If he does not expect to be in the house at the time that opportunity presents itself, I hope he will indicate to the acting minister that this matter might be considered even at that late stage in the deliberations.

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, it goes without saying that 36 weeks is better than 30 weeks, and therefore we are pleased to have the amendment that has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture. I am very glad the Minister of Labour asked the Minister of Agriculture to do this rather than the Minister of National Health and Welfare, who is to be acting minister of labour. That leaves the Minister of National Health and Welfare free to give consideration to a good cause, as he often says he is so willing to do.

Mr. Martin: Do you know of anybody who considers and does more about good causes than the Minister of National Health and Welfare?

Mr. Knowles: My, but those words are encouraging. They give us hope that on third reading, after the Minister of Labour has gone to Geneva, we will be able to persuade the Minister of National Health and Welfare—

Mr. Gregg: Delighted.

Mr. Knowles: —to go the whole way. The Minister of Labour says he will be delighted.

An hon. Member: O.K., sit down.

Mr. Knowles: If it were in order I would be moving a subamendment to the amendment now before the house suggesting that the word "thirty-six" be changed to the word