

I am referring to the then Minister of Fisheries, Hon. James Sinclair. There was also a brief from the then hon. member for Burin-Burgeo, now a member of the other place and, as is well known, there were representations on the subject made by the then Secretary of State, now chairman of the Canadian Transport Commission, who was also a member of the government representing a constituency in the province of Newfoundland.

I suspect that those records do not by any means disclose the whole story of what was going on at the time in regard to unemployment insurance coverage for fishermen, but I do know that the then Minister of Fisheries was interested in the subject, that the member of the cabinet from the province of Newfoundland was also interested and that there was considerable pressure on the then Minister of Labour to take steps to bring the fishermen into coverage. In fact, of course, that did not happen at the time. It was some time before action was taken in that regard. Indeed, not till 1957 did coverage for fishermen become operative under the Unemployment Insurance Act.

Some members will recall that in 1957 we had a new government. One of the first acts of the new government was to introduce an amendment to the Unemployment Insurance Act generally extending the period of seasonal benefit coverage in view of the increasingly high level of unemployment that was developing at the time. I am not asking anyone to go back and read the record of *Hansard*, but to try to put this matter into perspective I should mention that I made a speech in the House on that occasion suggesting that the general move toward seasonal benefits with no relationship to the level of premiums, and without reference to any special grant into the fund, was attacking the root principle on which the Unemployment Insurance Act was supposed to have been founded.

History has shown that in the period shortly after that the balance in the fund began to take a drastic plunge and that over a fairly short period it dropped from almost \$1 billion into the red. It is in that context that the first assessments were made of the coverage of fishermen under unemployment insurance, and I submit that it was out of that situation that the Gill report developed.

Some comments were made by the unemployment insurance advisory committee on the question of coverage of fishermen. I submit that the initial reaction of the unemployment insurance advisory committee, perhaps partly because of lack of experience, was very shallow and incomplete and that the Gill committee really did not go into this question—I have checked their recommendations on the coverage of fishermen—except in a very superficial way. Their recommendations stem from the fact that the fishermen were receiving consideration at a time when there was a drastic, general decline in the level of the fund, partly as a result of the extension of seasonal benefits and partly as a result of the generally prevailing high level of unemployment. So the coverage of fishermen had two strikes against it almost from the start.

As a result of the first reaction and resulting recommendations on coverage for fishermen embodied in the

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report of the committee of inquiry, generally known as the Gill report, the people who devised the white paper on unemployment insurance, without any real background study, simply carried forward the rather superficial opinions expressed in the Gill report into the white paper; and this in turn has now been brought forward in the bill before the House.

I would invite the Minister of Labour to read the brief submitted to the Gill commission in 1961 by the spokesman for the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union, the late William Rigby—and I say this advisedly, Mr. Speaker. Before commenting on what Mr. Rigby had to say, may I tell the minister a little story that I heard about William Rigby in another context which I think illustrates that many people who did not share his political views, of whom I was one, had a healthy respect for the keenness of his intelligence and for the lucid manner in which he could put forward a case.

Mr. Rigby appeared before a commission of inquiry into workmen's compensation in the province of British Columbia which was conducted by a former chief justice of the province, Chief Justice Gordon Sloan. Apparently there was a lot of high-priced legal talent there and some of the QC's and others objected to Mr. Rigby appearing before the commission because he had not been admitted to the bar of the province. The Chief Justice, in his capacity as commissioner, very quickly set them back on their heels by saying that of all the briefs submitted to him regarding possible changes in the operation of workmen's compensation in British Columbia, the one presented by Mr. Rigby was the most lucid and penetrating; that far from disqualifying him from appearing before the commission, he wanted to tell everyone that he had made an impressive contribution to the question of possible changes in the composition of the workmen's compensation board of British Columbia.

● (3:50 p.m.)

I would suggest that if the Gill commission, and those responsible for the preparation of the white paper, had paid more attention to the analysis of the whole question of coverage for fishermen as presented in this brief we might not be playing around in the dark about an alternative plan which apparently the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry has not been able to produce in a manner satisfactory even to the government.

Indeed, as I look through this presentation in its earlier part which deals with general questions of principle in respect of the application of unemployment insurance, I find that many aspects of this bill which are being hailed by the Minister of Labour as advances, including one of universality and the technique of financing the plan above a certain level of unemployment, are all outlined by Mr. Rigby in his brief as a prelude in which he describes the special case of the fisherman. At page 13 of the brief he said:

If the general principles we have advocated in the foregoing section of our brief were accepted as guidelines for a reconstruction of the act the present section would be unnecessary, except as an illustration of the deficiencies of the previous structure.