

*Unemployment Insurance*

It is a matter of deep concern to all of us that a change in legislation such as this is necessary. Those who experienced the conditions of certain previous days will rebel at the very thought of having again to go through anything approaching that type of condition in our Canadian national life. It is my fervent hope and prayer that the legislation to follow this resolution will not have to be used in the days that lie ahead in a way similar to that in which relief was granted at one time to our Canadian people.

When the government gave notice of the introduction of this measure, and indicated the urgency therefor, we were anxious to facilitate their action as much as possible, for reasons which of course will be obvious to all. We wanted to have these payments made available, with the least possible delay, to the people entitled to them. For this reason we are prepared to facilitate the legislation and to have the bill brought in for consideration.

The minister and other hon. members of the house will at once recognize the complexity of the explanation which the minister gave. I think it was as clear an explanation as it was possible to give, having in mind the changes which it is proposed to make. I do not complain about that, but there were a number of matters dealt with by the minister which perhaps should be left for more mature and detailed consideration when the bill comes before the house for second reading and is considered afterwards in the committee stage. Nevertheless, time being of the essence, we hasten to indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the house that we support the resolution so that the bill may be introduced at the earliest possible moment and there may be no possible reason for delaying the payments to be made under it. I express the wish, however, that its purpose was to create work rather than to provide a feeble substitute therefor.

The minister said that unemployment insurance was the first line of defence against unemployment. Of course that was about all that those of us who took part in the proceedings of the committee on unemployment insurance when the bill was first brought into the house ever thought it would do. I think it is only fair to workers and to industry generally to say that, because the benefits arising from unemployment insurance at their best have never been great. They can only be regarded, as I said before, as a weak and feeble substitute for a job.

I have taken a personal interest in unemployment insurance legislation, largely because of the fact that in my own riding

[Mr. Graydon.]

there is a great body of working men and women who come under its provisions. My interest arises also because of the fact that when the committee was set up in 1940 I was a member of it, and I was extremely interested in the work it did. Without introducing any note that should not be introduced, I think I may say that although I was not in the house at the time, I take some pride in the fact that a former prime minister of Canada, who was then the leader of our party, introduced unemployment insurance into Canada for the first time in 1934.

I think it is the proper time now for me to say a word on the question of unemployment; because at the root of this change in the legislation is the fact that the government recognizes that jobs are in jeopardy in certain parts of our land. I do not know whether everybody realizes it, but we must recognize that when a man is out of work and without any income, and unemployment insurance benefits are not available to him, for any of the various reasons that may be advanced, in most parts of Canada there is no way in which he can secure any help from public agencies other than welfare organizations to which voluntary contributions have been made. It is true that in some places that is done on a municipal basis, but generally speaking in many parts of Canada all he can do is sit there without any means of support. We cannot afford to allow that to happen to anyone in Canada so long as we have the power to remedy the situation.

We have heard enough in the house since the session began a week ago to be convinced that, while there may be an argument over the extent of unemployment in Canada, there has been a substantial increase in unemployment in many sections of the country. I should also like to point out to the minister that, while his figures and those of the government seem to hover around 380,000 unemployed in Canada, as others have said, that does not indicate the true picture. Apart altogether from those who may never have intended to register under the Unemployment Insurance Act—and there must be many thousands across Canada who do not utilize its provisions—the minister well knows that if a man does not renew his registration at the end of thirty days from the date he first registers, his file becomes dormant. He may not have a job at all; nevertheless in the records of the unemployment insurance office he is regarded as a man to whom no more attention need be paid so far as a job is concerned. It is taken for granted, and I suppose naturally