

Supply—Labour

because they could not possibly come under the act. If they file a declaration of partnership, take the matter to court and have it settled, that is fine; but there are many people who do not want to go to court. They assume that it will cost a good deal of money to fight the government which has so much legal talent at its disposal. A lot of people pay unemployment insurance rather than fight; they are afraid to oppose the government. These people should never have to pay it at all. I know of some cases where they have refused to pay and did not hear anything further.

There is another situation in which many people in this country have been involved, including parliamentarians. This is a situation where a cattle auctioneer holds a sale and obtains help from other cattle dealers or farmers who come in for a few hours a week. In many cases they have been doing this for years. Now, it has been decided that these people should pay unemployment insurance. In cases where the money has not been collected, these people are being soaked—if I may use that expression—for arrears for a number of years. One such case is presently under appeal before the commission. It is quite clear that this is not a master and servant relationship. It was never intended that such people should pay into the unemployment insurance fund; they are not on the labour market and possibly never will be. These people in many instances are farm operators. There are many situations like this which are pure nonsense. I know there may be those who will say, "We have some colour of right to try to collect unemployment insurance". This should not be done and is not the intention.

In view of the fact that the act is to be revised, and in view of the fact that some of these anomalies are to be removed, I hope the minister will use his good offices to see that the enforcement of the act is a little less enthusiastic than it has been in the past. It has been said that ignorance of the law is no excuse. That maxim may have applied in the early days in England when there were not many laws and regulations. It was quite sensible in those days to assume that the public ought to be cognizant of the laws which existed. Nowadays, however, with the growth of the government in every field of life and with the many regulations which exist in respect of every department of government, how could the general public be expected to know about every obscure regulation which is published in the *Canada Gazette*. Who reads the

Canada Gazette? Why should people be dragged in by the officers and told that even though they did not know about a certain regulation they are going to be investigated and made to pay, even if it means bankruptcy. In this day and age, when the government is extending its influence into every walk of life, I hope that the minister, his colleagues, and others who are responsible will see that regulations which affect large numbers of citizens are posted up and advertised in all the newspapers and periodicals. Then, the members of the public will know what they are up against.

I believe we should adjust to the times. It is not good enough to say that ignorance of the law is no excuse. That might have been all right 100 years ago but it is not good enough today. All levels of government which pass regulations should ensure that the average person has a reasonable opportunity of being made aware of these regulations before they are enforced so that unnecessary hardship will not be imposed. I hope the minister and his colleagues will consider all these things which affect every one of us today.

• (4:10 p.m.)

Mr. Cowan: The few remarks I wish to make this afternoon I had intended to express on the estimates of the Department of National Health and Welfare. But as the hon. member for Oxford who preceded me remarked, you can never tell when estimates are to come before the house and when an opportunity will be given to you to express yourself. I have taken the opportunity under the heading of the Department of Labour to speak of working conditions in the veterans' hospitals of the Dominion of Canada which are directly under the jurisdiction of the federal government and not under any provincial departments of labour.

For some years past, I have been advocating that working conditions for nurses in the hospitals of the nation are lamentable and deplorable. I believe that the small number of girls coming forward as students of nursing shows the girls realize that nursing is not one of the great professions of this country so far as material gain is concerned. They are shunning nursing.

In the newspapers of yesterday and today there are long reports of statements about the nurse shortage in the country. One report, of yesterday is based on a statement made by the Ontario Hospitals Association before the Ontario committee on the healing arts which