

Unemployment Insurance Act

Mr. Starr: Would the hon. member be good enough to wait a few moments until the officials get here?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Having waited so long for the bill, I agree.

The Chairman: Shall clause 3 carry?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): No, the minister wishes to wait for his officials. We are always anxious to accommodate the minister.

Mr. Starr: The hon. member for Essex East asked what revenue the raising of the ceiling would bring into the fund. My answer, subject to correction if there is any to be made, is approximately \$2 million.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): So that my estimate was correct.

Mr. Caron: Mr. Chairman, I see that the word "remuneration" has been changed to "earnings" and in the French version the word "rémunération" has been changed to "rémunération à gains". Would the minister tell us what is the difference and why a change has been made from "remuneration" to "earnings" in English and from "rémunération" to "rémunération à gains" en français?

Mr. Starr: There are a number of clauses in the Unemployment Insurance Act where the word "earnings" is used and only in a few is the word "remuneration" or "remunerated" used. In order to make the act consistent by using one term it has been decided by the commission and its legal department to make this amendment so that in all cases the reference will be to "earnings".

Mr. Caron: I see in the dictionary that "earnings" means fruit of work, salaries, wages, and "remuneration" means reward, pay for services rendered. It is not quite the same. If you study the etymology of the words there is quite a difference and they might be used in both ways, a charge on the remuneration and on the wages.

Mr. Starr: I am told by the legal department that they can define "earnings" easier than "remuneration" under the act.

Mr. Caron: I did not quite hear.

Mr. Starr: They can define "earnings" much more readily and in a better way than they can define the word "remuneration".

Mr. Caron: The reason they have changed the wording from "remuneration" to "earnings" is that they have an easier task in defining it with relation to the act.

Mr. Starr: Yes.

Clause agreed to.

Clauses 4 and 5 agreed to.

On clause 6.

Mr. McMillan: Mr. Chairman, this is the vital clause of the whole bill. It has to do with the increased contributions which are out of all proportion to the increased benefits available under the act. I maintain that if the government wants to give the same increased benefits to the workers that they are proposing in the bill they can do so at a fraction of the cost of these proposed increased contributions. Under clause 6 working people who come under the Unemployment Insurance Act are set apart from working people who do not come under the act. I noticed this morning that the Minister of Finance revealed a high rate of interest in the bill and I think he has good reason to do so. In my opinion clause 6 is a clarion call to these select Canadians to come to the aid of the government.

The government is in trouble through its inept financing and is calling on the working people of Canada to help it out. The working people of Canada are the only ones being called upon at the present time. They, and they alone, are being called upon by the government to meet, in large part, the government's deficit. As citizens of Canada they will be called upon also, along with the other citizens of Canada, to assume the rest of the deficit.

I feel that this is unfair but it is something which the big majority in the house, no doubt, can carry through. However, I hope that they do not push it through the house because it is not to the advantage of the workingman. I believe there is something deeply wrong in the Department of Finance and the workingman is the sucker who is being called upon to meet these deficits. Many of the representations made in the committee were to the effect that the wording of the act was ambiguous and allowed various interpretations. I know many who said this, and I think labour also said it, although I am not sure of that. I said in the house that before the March election some people in my area who had been making contributions under the Unemployment Insurance Act, but who were elderly and had not been working for some considerable time, received letters telling them to come down and collect their unemployment insurance. I hope that the election had nothing to do with this practice, but I have repeated this statement in the house before and I know that it is true.

I do not begrudge people this money. I can say this, too, that at election time there was no criticism of the administration of the act. However, now I do hear criticism about certain ambiguities in the act. I would hope that the present government would not use