

Unemployment Insurance

are read in the house. Their quality does not seem to be very durable. Perhaps that is why we always have to have something new.

Mr. Hamilton (Notre Dame de Grace): I wish you would make a few speeches like the one by the Prime Minister from which you just quoted.

Mr. Pickersgill: I was neither shocked nor surprised last night when the parliamentary secretary did what has been done in the Tory propaganda over and over again, and he was supported in this, which I thought was rather more serious, by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Starr). If I may have the attention of the Minister of Labour, I should like to point out that last night his parliamentary secretary made the categorical statement that fishermen were brought under unemployment insurance by the present government and the Minister of Labour echoed those words and said that was correct.

I have the reference right here. I have in my hand chapter 50 of the statutes of 1956, assented to on August 14, 1956, some considerable time before hon. gentlemen were on the treasury benches over there. Chapter 50 added to the Unemployment Insurance Act an amendment to section 29 in the following terms:

Notwithstanding anything in this act, the regulations made with the approval of the governor in council under section 26 for including employment in fishing in insurable employment may, for all purposes of this act, provide for—

I do not think I need take the time to read the provisions. It does seem to me that a parliamentary secretary and a minister speaking in the house about their own department, about an act which the minister is responsible for administering, should know the truth about that act, and you could not have any better evidence of maladministration than evidence that the head of the department and his principal assistant are ignorant about the contents of the legislation. Either they are ignorant of the facts or a worse interpretation has to be put upon it and, as that would be unparliamentary, I will not do it. However, I will say, because it is not unparliamentary to say it, that the iteration and reiteration of this untruth, this false statement in the Tory propaganda, is characteristic of the propaganda of hon. gentlemen opposite in the constituencies. It does not seem to me that hon. gentlemen have gained very much by making that kind of claim.

The minister wanted to know what my views were about whether fishermen should be continued under the Unemployment Insurance Act. I do not think anyone else in the house needs to know what my views are on this subject.

[Mr. Pickersgill.]

An hon. Member: What is that?

Mr. Pickersgill: I do not think anyone else in the house needs to know what my views are on this subject. I was a member of the government that put that provision into the act and I will fight to the very limit of my capabilities to keep it there. I must say I am shocked by the apparent undercurrent of opposition to the coverage of fishermen under the act. As the hon. member for Gloucester said yesterday, these people are engaged in the most ancient industry of our country. I do not know of any group of people who are more deserving of protection similar to that given to other people and who were denied it for so long on technical grounds, and I say that once we have found some means of providing this protection it should be continued.

I know that quite an argument can be made for an alternative scheme, and that is fine if you are not a fisherman. But the fishermen, as the hon. member for Gloucester pointed out, are for the most part engaged in a seasonal occupation in most regions of Canada. There are a few areas where you can fish the whole year round but they are very few. The fishermen want to be under unemployment insurance and they want to get their stamps for their fish. Why? So that when other jobs are available they can get stamps for their other work and thus have coverage like other people. If they were under some other scheme they would not be able to take jobs during the part of the year that they cannot fish and get the coverage that other Canadians have. They would have to pay for their stamps but they would get no insurance, which would not be fair.

A great many of these people want to be able to take jobs in the winter time. It is true that most of them have not been able to take jobs over the last four years but that is not their fault. That is because jobs were not available. The hon. member for Gloucester gave the figures yesterday and they do not need to be repeated, but out of the tremendous drop in the fund of hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars it is estimated that the drain of fishermen on the fund has been something like \$23 million. That is not a very considerable amount.

But I will say this about the fund itself, and I think I betray no secrets in doing so. When this matter was considered at the time the addition was made to the act it was decided, after deliberation, that there first should be a year or two of operation under the act to see how it worked and it was also under consideration that if in fact, as seemed likely, fishermen's insurance would not be actuarially sound just as insurance in the case of other