

Unemployment Insurance Act

insurable employment, and be able to carry on their insurance coverage while engaged in fishing.

I have had on occasion a good many complaints registered with me by men who follow fishing during the fishing season and engage in other work at other times, usually during the winter months. While they pay some contribution to the unemployment insurance fund, as far as they are concerned that is wasted effort, because they are not in it long enough to be able to build up any coverage under the fund. It seems to me that by adopting the suggestion that has been made in another connection, provision could be made for them to carry on their benefits even though they were temporarily out of insurable employment. That principle could well be applied to this one-third of the fishermen whom the unemployment insurance commission claim regularly follow an alternative occupation.

Mr. Jones: Mr. Chairman, I should like to express briefly my support of the hon. member for Kootenay West on behalf of the fruit growers, who are very anxious to be included under the provisions of the act. As the minister probably knows, we have a peculiar situation in the Okanagan valley, where a great number of men and women are employed at times in packing houses and so on, in work for which they are covered, but very rarely are they working long enough to qualify for any benefits. Time and again they have approached me with a view to having those payments refunded. They feel they are taken from them under false pretences because they are never covered.

The fruit growers' association at their last convention went on record asking that all fruit workers should be covered under the act. I hope the minister will carry out his promise to widen the term "horticulture" to include all farm workers. I understand the difficulty in the past has been the collection of payments from the workers, but in my discussion of the problem with several workers they all agreed that they were quite willing to co-operate by going to the nearest town and making their payments. The farmers concerned are also willing to carry out their part to ease the burden on the department. I hope the minister will give consideration this year to the demand of the small fruit grower, especially, to be covered under the act.

Mr. Cameron (Nanaimo): Mr. Chairman, I should like to revert for a moment to the question of the coverage of fishermen. I recognize quite clearly the difficulties the

[Mr. Barnett.]

minister has suggested with regard to covering these types of employment. I remember some years ago having a brief conversation with the minister of labour of British Columbia when I was in the British Columbia legislature, about the problem of bringing fishermen under the workmen's compensation act. To some degree we faced the same difficulty there, in that the workmen's compensation act is based on the assumption that those covered will be wage earners and that a certain proportion of their daily wage, at that time, went into the fund and was met by the employers' contribution.

However, Mr. Pearson, who was the minister of labour, worked out a formula that he considered would be satisfactory, which was to base the contributions on the value of each fisherman's catch and place on the fish buyers the responsibility of deducting it from the money that would have been paid for the catch and in that way making the payments into the fund. Unfortunately Mr. Pearson very shortly afterward disappeared from the political scene and, as far as I am aware, his successors have not gone on with that idea.

I recall this, as I think it is a suggestion that might have to be followed if the department is considering ways and means of bringing fishermen under the Unemployment Insurance Act.

However, there is another and perhaps more fundamental difficulty, and that is that this is insurance against a period of unemployment, whereas what the fisherman requires is insurance against an inadequate income gained through the fishing season, which in most years is approximately the same length. It is curtailed only on account of weather or alterations in the regulations. I wondered whether perhaps the purpose might be accomplished by setting something in the nature of a minimum annual income based on past experience, which could be made up in those years when the fisherman's income fell below that point. Collections could be made, as I suggested, by way of deductions from the value of each individual fisherman's catch, and the buyer's contribution based on his annual purchases of fish.

Mr. Stick: Mr. Chairman, I should just like to say one word. I should like to thank the minister for giving me the assurance that this matter is not finished; that he is going to approach it probably from another angle, and that the needs of fishermen as far as unemployment insurance is concerned will continue to be considered until some positive solution is found.

I am not concerned whether it comes under the Unemployment Insurance Act or whether