

Unemployment Insurance Act

the same as anybody else. He receives no help in this regard from the unemployment insurance fund, even though he has been paying into the fund. I am not suggesting that such a person should be in the same position as those who have worked for 12 months or a period of years, but I am saying that if he has been paying into the fund he should be entitled to some return when, because of conditions beyond his control, he is unable to find employment.

It had been my hope that the Minister of Labour would go beyond what he is now proposing to the house. We appreciate the increase. We appreciate any steps forward, but surely there are others who should have been included at the same time. When because of regulations people who have only five and half months stamps, and not six months stamps, are denied assistance because of age or because the agency cannot supply work, even though they are available, I say without hesitation that the government is an accessory to theft. I say that the government is taking money under false pretences, because when one pays a premium he is entitled to a return.

It is my hope that as soon as possible further and greater advances will be made in respect of the policies and regulations pertaining to unemployment insurance, and that even beyond that greater measures will be instituted by this government in an effort to increase rather than curtail employment. I shall conclude as I opened by reminding hon. members of the house of the words of the hon. member for York East, when he said in effect: Knock your heads together, and come up with an economic social security plan for all the people of this country.

Mr. Frank Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, ever since the publication of the report of the royal commission under the chairmanship of Mr. Gill some five and a half years ago there has been an expectation on the part of parliament and on the part of many people in the country that the Unemployment Insurance Act would undergo the tortuous process of being overhauled, and eventually reach parliament. Reference has been made previously to the Gill committee report, but at this time I should like to refer to recommendation No. 11 which relates to the extent to which coverage under the act should be applied. Certain classes of employment are exempt under the provisions of the act; they are excluded from coverage. In fact I believe the term is "exempted employment". This has been the

situation since the period just after the second world war, when the act came into existence.

The Gill committee in some of its recommendations referred to the classes or types of employment which were excluded. It summarizes section 27 in the act, which establishes the excluded categories and points out in very general terms that the people involved are government employees, teachers, members of the police forces, employees in charitable or non-profit organizations, employees in hospitals, domestic servants, and so on. They also mentioned what they call the other broad exempted class of employees, namely those whose income is in the bracket of more than \$5,460 a year. As I understand it, the committee recommended that these groups, which are now exempted, should be included.

• (5:50 p.m.)

If there was a principle involved in the act in 1940 or 1941, when it came into existence, it was that certain classes of employees should be excluded from coverage, because of the unlikelihood that they would fall within or become involved in a situation of temporary unemployment. The other reason for exclusion of classes of employees related to those who were almost guaranteed unemployment, such as loggers, fishermen, hunters, trappers and other seasonal employees. The Gill committee seeks to alter that situation by recommending that these classes should be included, not because they may become temporarily unemployed, but to share in losses in respect of the unemployment insurance fund. The commission felt that these losses should be spread as broadly as possible. If that is the case and it is accepted, then we need to change the whole concept of the act. It is no longer one of insurance but one of a general classification of welfare.

Neither the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. MacEachen) when introducing this bill for second reading, nor the government, has given any indication as to what is intended in respect of the recommendation of the Gill committee that teachers, municipal employees, government employees, employees of police forces and the like should be included for coverage under the act. We know it is permissible under the act to include classes of employees previously excluded by order in council. This was done, I believe in 1957, some 11 years ago in the case of fishermen. The Liberal government of that day included fishermen through an extensive set of regulations established by way of order in council.