

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

constituted very important evidence and I want to compliment the members of the commission who were before the committee upon their frankness and the wide-open way in which they answered any questions that were asked. There was no doubt that they had paid a lot of attention to the bill and there was never a question asked in the committee where the answer was not given.

A considerable number of amendments have been made to the bill. I am not going to go into them in detail because we will be considering them on the particular sections. Some do not amount to very much as they merely change the wording and so on.

I was disappointed in the change from 51 to 30 weeks because at the present time we have rather widespread unemployment. I realize that the premiers of the ten provincial governments are meeting with the federal government to devise ways and means of caring for the totally unemployed who today are the problem of the municipalities. The municipalities just are not able to handle them.

Cutting down the period to 30 weeks—I understand it is to be amended to 36 weeks—from the previous 51-week period means widening the area of unemployment. You are taking 3.5 per cent of the claimants after 36 weeks of unemployment insurance—they would have gone on to 51 weeks under the act—and throwing them into the ranks of the totally unemployed to become a burden on the municipality. Unless a formula can be found by the federal and provincial governments to take care of them, that is what will happen. That is the main thing I am worried about, that we are widening that area of unemployment by the period between 36 and 51 weeks.

I am not unmindful of the fact that the 36-week period is not going to become operative for three years, that those who are entitled to the 51 weeks at the present time under the act will be carried for that period, but new persons coming under the act will come under the 36-week clause. I hope that some consideration will still be given, not only by the department but by the federal-provincial people who are examining the whole question of unemployment, to see if we cannot avoid throwing these people into the ranks of the unemployed, at a much earlier time, thus to become a burden on the municipalities. That was one of my main beefs.

The other point that I was interested in, and have been for a long time, is the bear trap that exists in regulation 5A with respect to

[Mr. Gillis.]

married women. I hope that the recommendation of the committee will be accepted by the commission and that certain wording in that regulation will be taken out where a woman now is obliged to make further contributions of 60 days' employment after her first separation after marriage. That wording is to be taken out. Now, with the exception of pinpointing her as a married woman under the act, the regulation will clean up all the troubles I have heard on that score, because of that particular wording. The committee made progress to that extent, and it also made progress to the extent of having the period which was reduced from 51 weeks to 30 weeks increased by some six weeks. So there was a good deal of value in that committee.

The other point over which there is going to be trouble is in regard to the man who is taken sick. Of course, if he is on benefits and has established a claim, he is protected. But the man who is unemployed and may be taken sick after he becomes unemployed may not be registered for benefits but is just as much unemployed as the man who is on benefits. There was a good deal of argument in the committee on that, and there may be some modification.

I was also pleased to see that the commission are continuing to accept the main principle of the Unemployment Insurance Act, and that is to expand it to take in more people. Two years ago anyone suggesting that fishermen would be included at all in the act would be considered crazy, but during the deliberations of this committee and after a continuing study by the commission it was decided and recommended by the committee that there was a group classified as fishermen that might be brought under it, that is, about 6,000 wage earners that could be administered and handled under the act as it is today. That is a beginning. The committee recommended that a continuing study be made of that particular industry and more and more brought in, as the feasibility of bringing them in is established.

I do not agree with the hon. member for Hamilton West, who makes the argument that, because the firemen were taken out, the policemen should not be brought in. Firemen are covered under the act and have been for some considerable time—not only municipal firemen, but a large number of firemen employed by the federal government at naval bases and so forth. They want to be included, because they have no guarantee of employment. The committee, instead of going along with the argument of the hon. member for Hamilton West that the firemen should be taken out because the policemen were out,