

Unemployment Insurance Act

cost to pay unemployment insurance benefits in a normal year, in a period of five years or in any other period; but I do not think we can be expected to ask the people to finance the risk that they are going to go through a period of cyclical unemployment over which they have no control, and over which the insured has no control. That is what we are being asked to do. We are being asked to carry the load by increasing the premiums by 30 per cent to cover the unemployment that resulted from the recession which affected the whole country. I do not think this is an insurable risk; I do not think we should be asked to insure it.

I am sure the people of Canada have received benefit from the unemployment insurance fund. I think the social security measures which have been taken in this country have been completely responsible for the fact that we did not have a catastrophe in Canada in the last two years when we had a very serious unemployment problem. If it had not been for the social security measures—and unemployment insurance was one of them—the situation would have been much worse than it has been.

This I think warrants the Canadian taxpayer in taking from the general revenues the moneys that are required to be put in the fund to equal the amount that was paid out because of the recession. Certainly the actuaries of this fund should be able to calculate what would be reasonable and regular unemployment. I think they will find it is not 500,000 people or 600,000 people. The figure of 150,000 might possibly be the number of people who would be unemployed during certain periods of each year. This might be classed as regular seasonal unemployment. I think this figure could be calculated and the benefits financed from the fund. But everything in addition to what we could consider regular in a normal year would obviously have to be classed as recession-type unemployment, and provision should be made for the payment of benefits from another fund.

Is it not unreasonable that government supporters should have risen and said that the workers want these benefits? I am quite well aware that the workers want these benefits, but they only amount to something less than \$25 million. Why should the workers be asked to pay \$100 million when they are going to get only \$25 million back? Let the minister stand up and say that the government will provide the additional \$75 million out of the treasury. If he will do that then I am quite prepared to support a plan under which the workers will only pay \$25 million for \$25 million in benefits.

[Mr. Peters.]

Mr. Browne (Vancouver-Kingsway): Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Peters: Mr. Chairman, that would amount to less than 10 per cent of an increase.

Mr. Browne (Vancouver-Kingsway): Would the hon. member mind telling us where he gets the figure indicating that the workers are being asked to contribute \$100 million to the fund?

Mr. Peters: Well, the amount runs anywhere from \$78 million to \$97 million. There is \$16 million over and above the \$78 million which is going to come out of the treasury, but obviously a large part of that is also going to come from the workers of the country, so the amount is somewhere between \$80 million and \$100 million.

Mr. Browne (Vancouver-Kingsway): You are including in that the employers' share?

Mr. Peters: Certainly I am including the employers' share. Anybody who was a member of the committee is quite well aware of the fact that the employers' share of the contributions is considered to be a factor in the wage structure. Certainly we were informed by every employers' organization that this was a fact, and I do not think any of the employers' organizations were very much in disagreement with this statement. It is a wage factor. If it were not being paid in one form the workers would be getting the advantage of it in another form. Therefore I suggest that the workers are being taxed for something and not being told they are being taxed for it.

We have no objection whatsoever to the worker paying for the benefits he is going to receive. One member mentioned this morning that he would like to see the period of contributions reduced from 15 weeks to 10 or 8 weeks. I agree that this should be done. I was surprised when the minister rose and said that this would cost money and would we support the 30 per cent increase if this were done. I suggest to the minister that we will support some of the 30 per cent increase to take care of a reduction in the number of weeks necessary to establish the benefit period. I do not know whether or not it would cost an extra 20 per cent. I am not familiar with what the cost would be, but I think we could quite easily add that amendment and still find that in the 30 per cent contribution the worker is being charged more than he is going to get out of it, even if that additional benefit were given to the worker.

I am suggesting that we are not opposed to the worker paying for what he gets. Under any insurance plan you only get what you pay for if you are lucky. In this case the