

Unemployment Insurance

(Translation):

Mr. Martel: Members of the opposition do not seem pleased with what I have just said, but I shall have the opportunity to take this up again later.

In closing, I express the hope that woodsmen who go to work each year in the states of Maine and New Hampshire may become entitled to unemployment insurance benefits. I also wish we had a better employment service that would offer them more opportunities in this field so that, inasmuch as it is humanly possible and practical, these workers may find work here in Canada, which would enable them to better their circumstances.

Since this legislation is of importance to Canadian woodsmen who go to work across the border, I am pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that I support it and that I will vote for this resolution.

Mr. Louis Fortin (Montmagny-L'Islet): Mr. Speaker, I am perhaps taken somewhat unaware when rising on the resolution now before the house. The fact is that I have just arrived from the southern part of the county of Montmagny-L'Islet which is precisely adjacent to the state of Maine. During the weekend I had the opportunity of meeting a number of Canadian woodsmen who work in some forest developments on the American side. This resolution precisely meets the requests made to me this weekend and on several occasions before.

There is a very large number of men, more particularly in the counties of the lower St. Lawrence who have to cross the border in order to earn a living on the American side. It happens that in the province of Quebec, mostly on the north shore, farmers in the north-western part of the Abitibi and lake St. John go to work in the woods during the winter, which is the quiet period of the year. It also happens that, close to the constituencies of Montmagny-L'Islet, Kamouraska, Bellechasse, Beauce and a few others, there are very large lumber industries, but on the American side, although owned and operated by Canadian companies.

Now, it can happen that in the same village, for instance, two individuals will go to work in the lumber industry during winter, one in the Abitibi area and the other in Maine. They do the same work, they earn just about the same wages and, consequently, they have the same obligations. Yet, when those workers

come back home, one can get unemployment insurance benefits, while the other gets none.

Let us not forget that the Unemployment Insurance Act is the most human social security measure that is known.

Unfortunately, I know there are people who, by all means possible, good or bad, seek to obtain pensions of all sorts from the government. But when it comes to unemployment insurance the matter is more serious. It is a case there of protecting workers who, for some reason or other, are out of a job during a certain period of the year. In fact, we are dealing with an extremely important social security measure, one which serves a purpose and is worthy of support. Workers, particularly in my constituency, cross over by the hundreds to the state of Maine every winter to work in the bush, and get no employment insurance benefits when the work is completed. Many of them, particularly from the south side parishes such as St. Pamphile, St. Juste and Lac Frontiere, live very close to the American border. In view of the high cost of living, those people, whose main job is farming and settlement work, have to do forestry work in wintertime.

I think this resolution is quite appropriate and I commend my good friend the hon. member for Beauce for sponsoring it. I can assure him that while we have been at odds at certain times in 1958, we are in agreement as far as his motion is concerned, and it gives me pleasure to support it, because I know it will be beneficial to my constituents generally, and to those of the neighbouring constituencies.

(Text):

Mr. R. J. McCleave (Halifax): Mr. Speaker, I had not intended originally to take part in this interesting debate but I do so for two reasons. First of all I give notice to my noisy friends on my right that at the conclusion of my speech which will be reasonably short I intend to move the adjournment of the debate. Second, my reason for taking part in it is to bring before the house certain information which I do not think has been brought forward in the debate so far simply in order to show some of the problems that must be met and solved by Canada if our woodsmen from the maritimes and Quebec who go to the state of Maine are to have the benefits of unemployment insurance.

First, the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Winch) in his thoughtful participation in the debate this afternoon asked