

*Social Security*

predecessor, the former member for Norfolk, Mr. Jack Roxburgh, who along with members on both sides of the house expressed the concern of the farming industry to government and parliament. I am pleased to see that his successor is carrying on with the same type of arguments and constructive proposals that characterized Mr. Roxburgh.

The motion itself is somewhat broader than the argument used by the hon. member for Norfolk-Haldimand. I think it is pretty difficult to deal with this matter in isolation. By that I mean it is difficult to do anything constructive by referring only to the regulations of the Unemployment Insurance Commission, which were used as the basis for my hon. friend's remarks. As I say, the motion itself is much broader than his remarks.

It calls for—

—extending from twenty-five to forty days the exemption period for social security—

Within that context I am sure it is really referring to the Canada Pension Plan and to unemployment insurance deductions as mentioned by the hon. member. I wish to emphasize, as he did, that here we are dealing only with itinerant farm labourers, not with permanent farm labourers who benefit from the provisions of these social measures. They received a real benefit when they were covered by the Canada Pension Plan in 1966, and when the provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Act were extended to cover them on April 1, 1967.

Both these programs were also welcomed by their employers. They put farmers in a position where they could compete more effectively in the labour market for good, responsible farm help. I had some particular knowledge of these matters. In 1967 I worked with hon. members on both sides of the house to express the serious concern of the agricultural industry with respect to deductions for income tax purposes, the filing of T-4 forms, and deductions for unemployment insurance benefits.

The April, 1967 issue of *The Grower*, a monthly publication of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, carried an editorial dealing with the serious situation facing the farm industry at that time. It was headed "Battle of T4 Form," and was in these words:

Consternation and frustration reign in the fruit and vegetable industry these days—

It would be fair to include the tobacco industry and many other industries that were also concerned.

—as the battle of the T4 form mounts in fury. It's the farmer against the bureaucrat, although the latter is only doing what parliament commanded him to do. It has to do with the difficulty of making out unemployment insurance forms and Canada Pension Plan forms where casual labour is involved. Actually the struggle is between the casual labour work force and the government. The farmer is in between. If he tries to obey the regulations he is caught up in a mountain of paperwork. One grower we know had 500 forms to make out. The report is that one auditor, operating in the Simcoe area where tobacco, apples and strawberries are heavy in the use of casual labour, had 10,000 T4 slips to handle and check. Even a ten year old boy picking strawberries has to declare he doesn't want coverage. Some refuse employment when asked for unemployment insurance number or their social security number. Others accept employment but give fictitious names and addresses. It all mounts up to a gigantic mess. To the grower it is a headache especially for those who are making a conscientious effort to comply. The result is a mounting demand for action at least to the point where the bureaucrats and the representatives of the farm community can sit down and draft a system that will work and that will not add to the difficulties already clouding the farm labour picture—

The growers are not fighting the law. It is the red tape that annoys, plus the very evident fact that many in the ranks of the casual labour force refuse to accept farm employment at a time when the labour shortage is at an all time high. Apparently the demand is not for elimination of existing regulations but for the development of a simple system in which the paperwork can be materially reduced.

That was the situation, Mr. Speaker. With the co-operation of members on both sides of the house, and with guidance and stimulation from all agricultural organizations—I will not name them here because I believe they were all involved—the matter was pressed home to the government.

This is a matter which extends to somewhat broader proportions than the motion before the house. We have to keep in mind the practical difficulties that exist. The Canada Pension Plan statute can only be amended under the circumstances set out in that act. It can only be amended by this parliament with the consent of a certain proportion of the provincial governments. I think it will be of no practical benefit to the farm industry if we or the government were to persuade the Unemployment Insurance Commission to do what my hon. friend has suggested. It would be a good step to take but it would not solve the situation because farmers would still have to make deductions for Canada Pension Plan contributions. They would still have to file T4 forms and make deductions for income tax