

Unemployment Insurance Act

on, as far as he and I are concerned, our studies are going to take different courses. The main drive under the Department of Fisheries will be to see what can be brought forward on behalf of the self-employed small fishermen while we will work in hearty co-operation to see if our plan can take up the slack with regard to the wage earners. Mr. Chairman, if you would be willing to permit it I would be most happy if the Minister of Fisheries would comment on that matter at this point.

Mr. Sinclair: Mr. Chairman, this invitation to speak certainly catches me by surprise. In the industrial relations committee most hon. members from fishing ridings spoke and pointed out the need for some sort of social security for fishermen comparable to that given to farmers and industrial workers. The report of the special committee of the unemployment insurance commission which has studied this problem for over three years made it very clear that there would be great difficulties in including fishermen who are almost entirely self-employed, either working for themselves or on a straight share of the catch of the boat.

Only about 7 per cent of the fishermen of Canada are wage earners in the sense that they would be included under the terms of the Unemployment Insurance Act. It was questionable whether it would be wise to include these 7 per cent who were wage earners and leave out the 93 per cent of the fishermen who were self-employed or working on shares. The feeling of members from fishing ridings was very strong that we should start by including that 7 per cent. It was argued that the pattern of fishing would change very quickly from the present system under which the men are self-employed or working on shares to a combination of a small wage and a share, which is the prevalent custom in Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries. It is because of that system that those countries have been able to include some classes of fishermen under their unemployment insurance acts.

If that step could be made after study, then certainly we would have to consider the position of the self-employed fisherman who did not have coverage. We have of course some forms of assistance provided by legislation such as the fishermen's indemnity fund, which was passed two or three years ago, to provide low-cost insurance for boats and one type of gear, lobster traps. Then there is the Fisheries Prices Support Act, which provides for fishermen the same type of protection that farmers get under the Agricultural Prices Support Act, and we also have a fishermen's loan bill before the house. However, we will

look at this matter again to see if it is possible to include the one group of fishermen under the Unemployment Insurance Act on the ground of their being wage earners or a combination of wage earner and sharer.

Mr. Barnett: Mr. Chairman, I should like to touch upon the question of unemployment insurance coverage for fishermen at this time. The consideration devoted to this aspect at the meetings of the industrial relations committee was of greater value than that devoted to any other subject. I realize that it would not be desirable to attempt to cover all that ground again here today. However, in reference to what both the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Fisheries have said in regard to the problem of bringing in those fishermen who may be self-employed, or in the industry on another basis than that of direct wage earners, I was quite impressed by a statement which appeared in the brief submitted to the committee by the unemployment insurance commission on this subject. It appears on page 3 of the mimeographed copy that was circulated to the committee. This statement is as follows:

During the off-season only one-third of the fishermen regularly follow any alternative occupation.

That particular part of their brief struck me in a somewhat different way than apparently it had struck the members of the commission when they drafted it. While they say "only one-third", to me it was quite significant that there were as many as one-third of the men who regularly follow another occupation in the off-season. It would appear to me quite logical to assume that this third of the fishermen who regularly follow or attempt to follow another occupation in the off-season are the fishermen, by and large, who do not secure during the fishing season an income which could be regarded as adequate on an annual basis. I know perfectly well that in British Columbia, at least, some of the fishermen are able during the course of their fishing activities to secure a fairly adequate income when looked at on an annual basis, and do not particularly require subsidiary employment. However, there are others who are not able to do so.

It seems to me that an approach which might be taken in this field is suggested in another clause of the bill, which enables certain individuals engaged in trade to carry on their unemployment insurance coverage while they may be temporarily self-employed. It seems to me that one of the methods which should be seriously studied in respect to broadening the coverage of fishermen beyond the actual wage-earning group is some arrangement that would enable those fishermen who have another attachment to