

Section 5.—Unemployment Insurance*

During the depression of the 1930s the need for a nation-wide unemployment insurance program became recognized. In 1935 the Employment and Social Insurance Act was passed by the Federal Parliament but was subsequently declared invalid by the Privy Council. Later, by consent of the provinces, an amendment to the British North America Act was obtained empowering the Federal Parliament to legislate on unemployment insurance and in 1940 the Unemployment Insurance Act was passed, making provision for a compulsory contributory unemployment insurance program at the national level and also for the establishment of a national employment service to operate in conjunction with and ancillary to the unemployment insurance operations. The Act came into effect on July 1, 1941; amended on several occasions, it was replaced by a new Unemployment Insurance Act, effective Oct. 2, 1955.† On Apr. 1, 1965, the operation of the National Employment Service was transferred to the Department of Labour and on Jan. 1, 1966 to the Department of Manpower and Immigration (see pp. 747-749).

Legislation provides for a compulsory insurance program administered by the Federal Government, and requires employers to join with their insurable employees and the Government in building up a fund. This fund is held in trust by the Unemployment Insurance Commission for the payment of benefit to eligible unemployed persons. The Act is administered by a Commission of three persons appointed by the Governor in Council, of whom one is the Chief Commissioner; one Commissioner, other than the Chief Commissioner, is appointed after consultation with employer organizations and the other after consultation with employee organizations.

The Unemployment Insurance Act applies to all persons employed under a contract of service** except: the Canadian Armed Forces; the permanent public service of the Federal Government; provincial government employees except where insured with the concurrence of the government of the province; certified permanent employees of municipal or public authorities; hunting and trapping; private domestic service; private-duty nursing; teaching; workers on other than an hourly, daily or piece rate earning more than \$7,800 a year effective June 30, 1968, unless they elect to continue as insured persons; employees in a charitable institution or in a hospital not carried on for purpose of gain except where the institution or hospital consents to insure certain groups or classes of persons with the concurrence of the Commission. All persons paid by the hour, day, or at a piece rate (including a mileage rate) are insured regardless of amount of earnings.

The amount of the employee contribution is determined by the employee's weekly earnings; an equal contribution is required from the employer. The Federal Government contributes one fifth of the aggregate employer-employee contribution and defrays administrative expenses. Contributions became payable on July 1, 1941. Benefit became payable on Jan. 27, 1942 and by Mar. 31, 1967 a total of \$5,414,000,000 had been paid.

The following statement shows the current weekly rates of contribution and benefit effective June 30, 1968. The weekly contribution is based on actual earnings in the week, irrespective of the number of days worked. The benefit rates are calculated on the average weekly contributions for the last 30 weeks in the 104 weeks preceding claim. In order to qualify for regular benefit, a claimant must have at least 30 weekly contributions in the last 104 weeks prior to claim, eight weekly contributions since the start of the last preceding regular benefit period or in the last year prior to claim, whichever is the shorter period, and 24 weekly contributions since the start of the last preceding benefit period, or in the year prior to the claim, whichever is the longer period.

*Prepared by the Unemployment Insurance and Manpower Section, Labour Division, Dominion Bureau of Statistics; statistics of unemployment insurance are compiled and published by the DBS from material supplied by the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

†Copies of the 1955 Act incorporating subsequent amendments are available from the Queen's Printer, Ottawa (Catalogue No. YX92-222/50).

**Commencing Apr. 1, 1957, coverage was extended to persons engaged in fishing, notwithstanding the fact that such persons are not employees of any other person but are usually self-employed; commencing Apr. 1, 1967, coverage is extended to employees engaged in agriculture and horticulture.