

PART VI

THE POSITION OF FOREIGN WORKERS

INTRODUCTION

In view of the nature and aims of sickness insurance, equality of treatment for national and foreign workers is seen to be a necessary condition if the insurance is to be completely effective in protecting both individuals and the community. By giving the worker a means of restoring his health as quickly and as economically as possible, sickness insurance lessens the chances of disablement or premature death, protects society against the risks of infection, ensures the maintenance of productive power and is, in general, of as much importance to the community as to the individual. Now, sickness insurance covers a permanent and immediate risk, to which the foreign worker is just as much exposed as the national worker, and this risk may occur however short the stay of the foreign worker in the country where insurance is compulsory.

A foreign worker who falls ill cannot on grounds of humanity be deprived of a minimum of care, and if he is excluded from the insurance system he will become a public burden until his cure or repatriation. Often, however, the precarious situation of a worker employed abroad, the need of earning a livelihood for a necessitous family, and the difficulty of obtaining medical assistance delay the indispensable treatment. It becomes more difficult to cure him, and the period during which he is deprived of his earnings by incapacity to work is lengthened. Sometimes, when faced with the results of being without pay, he will return to work before he is cured, the risks of infection being thus increased as well as those of aggravation of the illness, disablement, or death. The absence of treatment at the right time thus interferes with the prophylactic purpose and social effects of insurance.