

us; but in the past a program was outlined for the purpose of giving work to the unemployed. In almost every activity, by governments, railroad companies, commercial and industrial concerns and so forth, there were many expansions that probably, in the normal course would not have been undertaken for one, two or three years. But I am not lacking in frankness when I say that the stringency of the financial situation rendered that course an intolerable burden to those who were subscribing to the fund to keep up that sort of program of works. The municipalities, which are creations of the provinces in which they are located, found themselves in many, I think in the majority of instances, quite unable to participate in any large way in contributing to programs of that kind. Some of the provinces, as hon. members well know, were unable to bear their share of the burden which in exceptional circumstances is largely their own, that is, looking after the destitute within their own borders when the community in which such people live cannot take care of them. Some of the provinces, as I say, found themselves utterly unable to carry the burden.

I do not think the members of the committee would care to have me go over again the situation in which the four western provinces found themselves. Not only could they not take care of their own share of the works that were outlined, but they had to borrow from the Dominion government money to take care of their share. Moreover, they found themselves utterly unable to take care of their obligations, both internal and external, falling due. That money had to be advanced, and I think it was very properly advanced to them. If one applies the strict rule of solvency or insolvency, they might be said to be insolvent in the sense of the word that they were not able to meet their obligations as they fell due, but none of those provinces is in fact insolvent. No hon. member would for a moment suggest that they are insolvent. They are, comparatively speaking, young provinces. I think it is a great tribute to the older provinces of Canada that they have been willing to lend their assistance. At least the expressions of view, as I have many times read them, of the leaders of thought in those provinces have reflected satisfaction in regard to the contributions which they, of course, as the biggest taxpayers, have to make towards helping out the newer provinces of confederation. The burden, as I say, was great, and that was why it became necessary, in the view of the government, not to be content with casual

[Mr. Gordon.]

meetings, if I may call them that, of premiers and other representatives of the provinces, but to have them all come to this city in order to have a free and frank discussion of the whole situation. The provincial representatives were very frank in their opinion that the time had come when the major portion of their work, so far as assistance to their people was concerned, would of necessity have to take the form of direct relief. I do not think we need call it the dole, because in spite of the pictures that have been painted in this chamber, I am well enough acquainted with certain lines of business, at least in this country, to feel confident that we are going to get through this period of depression, and I do not think the end will be long delayed. I do not for a moment believe that in some magic way the situation as we had it in 1928 and the earlier part of 1929 will be restored. I doubt very seriously if I would like to see it restored, because it will be recalled that at that time almost everyone in Canada with the speculative instinct developed at all was engaged in some sort of speculation and extravagant expenditure which he could not afford. I think there are many members of this chamber who, if they cared to admit it, would say that they too were engaged in speculation without regard to the future. Therefore I do not expect to have restored in a month, or even a year, the condition of affairs that existed in 1928 and in the early part of 1929.

In further reply to the observations made by the hon. member for Quebec East, I would say that the program of works which were got under way and are not yet completed, and which it will take a considerable time to complete, will be continued where the work is of a kind that once having been started could not be stopped without great loss. That will run into considerable sums of money, although I have not under my hand the exact amount of money that will be expended in the completion of these works.

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): Just what type of work is the minister referring to?

Mr. GORDON: I did place on Hansard the telegram that was sent to all the provincial premiers after the conference that was held here so that there would be a clear definition of the arrangement that was arrived at. At the risk of repeating—

Mr. GARLAND (Bow River): I do not want the minister to go to that trouble, but would he just give an illustration of the type of work he has in mind?