

Supply—Labour

It was my desire to call this matter to the government's attention, and I hope to hear from the minister when he speaks, whether or not his department has taken this recommendation into consideration; and whether or not they are likely to have included in the estimates grants that will make it possible for many of these communities across Canada to get further assistance.

Mr. J. H. Blackmore (Leithbridge): A discussion on the estimates of the Department of Labour automatically brings to mind the question of standards of living, because the welfare of labour is so vitally concerned with standards of living. I have been interested in the discussion thus far, and I was particularly interested in the contribution made by the member for Vancouver East and the member for Cape Breton South. Perhaps I did not see just as deeply into the general current of the thinking of those gentlemen as I should have, but it seems to me they were advocating policies which were contradictory. I do not raise these matters to criticize the hon. gentlemen, for whom I have a high degree of esteem, but merely to point out the need for some other kind of thinking.

The member for Vancouver East fittingly brought to the attention of the house a chart, which he found in the current issue of the *Financial Times*. This chart indicated that whereas the expenditure of labour and people generally on the needs of life had increased from 90 to 120 since 1947, yet the actual amount of goods which those people had been able to purchase had dropped from 90 to approximately 80. This is a solemn warning to the members of this house, as representatives of the community of Canada. Something must be done about that. Obviously, if the trend continues, a disaster of one kind or another will result.

Evidently the member for Vancouver East had in mind some measure for reducing the cost of living. I am in hearty accord with him in that objective. This immediately poses the question of how this cost of living is to be reduced. How are you going to bring down the retail prices in Canada? It is well known that if the labouring men strike to raise wages, immediately there will be another spiral of increased costs. If the labouring men do not strike, but continue with the wages they are now receiving, and the prices continue much as they are, then a generation of young Canadians will almost assuredly suffer far more seriously than this house would care to contemplate. Some means of bringing down that cost of living, then, is the thing for which we are looking. I am sure there is no one

in Canada more anxious to find a formula that will satisfactorily accomplish that objective than the Minister of Labour.

The member for Cape Breton South called for a tax upon everyone for the sake of social security. At one time, he had in mind industrial pensions. The experience of the United States with that sort of thing, which he related, was not a happy one. This was particularly true of the coal industry.

I rather doubt that there is anyone in the house today who, in his heart, would not favour some sort of universal pension for people after about 55, when they can be absorbed no longer in industry. I should like to see a straight vote of the members of parliament, in which they would be entirely free from political consideration, just to ascertain whether there is anyone in the house who would not favour universal pensions such as I have described. I do not believe that, by secret ballot, the nays would be very numerous.

My question is, how are we going to get that universal pension? Where will the money come from? The member for Cape Breton South, a man of sound judgment, wide learning and great ability, as I have said, advocated a universal tax. It must be obvious to the member for Vancouver East and the member for Cape Breton South that if there were a universal tax the following things would happen: If the tax were upon industry, then industry would have to raise prices which would have a result directly opposite to that which the member for Vancouver East desired.

Mr. Gillis: I do not agree with that.

Mr. Blackmore: It will be necessary for the hon. member to establish that point.

Mr. Gillis: They are throwing that much and more away now.

Mr. Blackmore: I do not think a scientific examination of the facts will bear out the member's contention. If the tax were levied upon the workingman, which he apparently envisages, then there would be a reduction in the amount of money those men would have to spend. This would destroy part of our internal capacity to consume, and would tend to destroy the possibilities for employment in industry. Again, this would be the exact opposite of what the member for Cape Breton South and the member for Vancouver East would favour.

If the government made a contribution towards this universal pension, then according to present government thinking the money would have to be raised by taxation, which would in turn raise the cost of living all