

Proposed Committee on Unemployment

April 15, supplementary benefits were paid to 136,000 workers. This year, of course, the number will be greater.

As I have noted, in the calendar year 1953 a grand total of \$148 million was paid out in unemployment insurance benefits. Of that total 80 per cent came from the employers and employees but 20 per cent came from federal taxpayers.

Let me remind the house also that it is to the families of the workers in Canada both insured and non-insured that the \$349 million in family allowances this year will go. The workers of Canada would have had to find some other way through private, municipal or provincial channels to provide the \$367 million which went last year to the aged citizens of this country, had it not been paid by the federal government through the federal government taxpayers.

These are only some of the main items to indicate the direct action which the federal government has taken within the realm of its responsibility. An impressive story is available on the part that various federal departments play in sponsoring activities which have a vital impact upon Canadian employment opportunities, and I hope it will be discussed during this debate. Just as I have welcomed the constructive suggestions and criticisms of the great national unions and those put forward by the mover of this resolution today, so will I listen attentively to any suggestions that may be put forward as this debate proceeds this afternoon.

Mr. Clarence Gillis (Cape Breton South): Mr. Speaker, I am glad I tried to raise this question last Thursday as a matter of urgency. I at least directed the thoughts of other people to the matter, but apparently did not make any great impression. This question of unemployment is not going to find a solution in the appointment of a committee of the House of Commons. It is a question that demands action. In the experience of most members of this house, the appointment of a committee is merely a convenient way of shelving a question and one which the people who want to send it to a committee have of getting rid of it for the time being. I am therefore disappointed—

Mr. Fulton: That was not the case with the old age security committee, as the hon. member himself will recall.

Mr. Gillis: I am disappointed with the approach of the official opposition.

Mr. Fulton: May I ask the hon. member a question? Did he not support the setting up of a committee to inquire into the matter of old age security, and would he not agree that that committee produced useful results?

[Mr. Gregg.]

Mr. Gillis: Mr. Speaker, my learned friend apparently does not understand the matter which is before the house. The matter of social security is a long-range program; it can go on for a long time and there is no finality to it. This question is one of urgency. What I said a moment ago still stands. You are dealing here with the bread and butter of people. It is a matter that should not require much study either by the government or by the members of the house. It is a matter that we have been faced with since 1914. It is a matter of war, false prosperity, depression and another war. Most members of this house have gone through all that. It should not be difficult for us to recognize the symptoms again. Unemployment is just a symptom of a disease. Once a good doctor recognizes the early symptoms of a disease, he will go to work and do what medical science tells him he should do in order to prevent the patient from going through all the agony of the disease and then succumbing to it. In the light of conditions in the world, unemployment as we have it today is a symptom of depression. I am going to call on a couple of good doctors as witnesses on the subject, and may I say that this is not a case of the C.C.F. crying "wolf, wolf". I have in my hand a clipping from the *Montreal Gazette* of December 4, 1952, which reads as follows:

Fear of a world depression, perhaps within the next two years, was expressed today by the Canadian Importers and Traders Association, embracing about 400 Canadian import firms.

That view was expressed in 1952, and the prediction is that we could be in the first stages of a depression in 1954. The second clipping I have is taken from a source which should be an authority. It is from the *Globe and Mail* of May 7, 1953, and reads as follows:

Thomas Oakley, past president of the association, said that there are signs of slackening in defence spending among western countries. This would result in a falling off of world trade, the basic cause of depressions.

I approach this matter, as do other members of this group, not from the point of view of straight unemployment but in the light of the ultimate result of unemployment if something is not done about it. I have in my hand another newspaper clipping of recent date from an Ottawa paper. It is a report of a statement made by Monsignor Coady of St. Francis Xavier University when speaking to the co-operative consumers' association of Kansas City in February of this year. He said, among other things:

Hot and cold wars have been brought about through the fierce competition between powerful industrial interests, with little prospect of their ever achieving finality. Indeed, it now appears that