

*The Address—Mr. Drew*

intended only for the purpose of meeting the desperate demands of war, were carried forward into the years beyond. Although many of those powers and controls have since then been repealed or diminished, the state of mind and the attitude toward parliament which those powers created do persist to an extent that may threaten the survival of our parliamentary system.

During the war, governments found it necessary, or claimed that they did, to keep a considerable amount of information to themselves, and, on the grounds of security, refused to parliament information which ordinarily parliament would have not only the right to obtain but the right to be given voluntarily as the basis of informed debate. Men who have been in the habit of treating information as their own special prerogative may find it difficult to throw off this habit, but the time is long past when it can be accepted as an excuse for withholding information from parliament, without serious danger to the continuance of our parliamentary system.

I think every hon. member of this house must be gravely concerned about what has happened in this country since we were last in session, and there should be equally great concern about the suppression of information which should have been given to the representatives of the people in this house. As recently as December 1 the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) gave a glowing account of the prospects for production, export trade, prices, and employment. It was only on the last day of the session that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner) indicated in some slight degree the extent to which our food exports to the United Kingdom might drop in 1950. That was serious enough in itself. What has happened since then is infinitely more serious. The loss of our assured markets for wheat, bacon, cheese, eggs, and other food exports, has had an immediate and disastrous effect on domestic farm prices. It is hard to realize that it is only a few weeks ago that the government was telling us we had no problem of surplus food products. Now the problem of surplus food, and the threat of even greater surpluses, is endangering our whole agricultural price structure, and threatening the security of our farmers.

The Minister of Agriculture now says that he expected this situation for two years. If that is so, why were we not given this information during the early days of the last session, when steps could have been taken in advance to meet the situation with which we are now confronted? The failure of the government to take effective steps in this matter

has produced immediate and serious consequences which are being felt in every part of Canada.

When the trades and labour council of Canada and the Canadian Congress of Labour made a joint representation to the government on January 2, they said:

The unemployment situation in Canada has become so serious as to cause apprehension throughout the nation.

In response to that statement the Department of Labour announced on January 7 that there were 261,000 unemployed, and that—a considerable portion of the current unemployment results from the continuing growth of the Canadian labour force, rather than from a decline in employment.

On January 19 the Minister of Finance stated that the unemployment situation in Canada was purely seasonal. As recently as January 30 the unemployment insurance commissioner said in Winnipeg—and I quote his words, as reported in the press:

The labour unions are exaggerating the total of unemployed in Canada.

The figures of unemployment released two days ago give some indication, but only a partial indication, of how serious the situation really is. Total unemployment is now said to be 375,600. Such a figure is hardly in keeping with the statement in the speech from the throne to the effect that unemployment is due to seasonal and local conditions. The percentages in different parts of Canada tell the story. They are highest in British Columbia, where they are shown as 15·8 per cent of the labour forces. Next come the maritimes, with 10·2 per cent of the labour forces unemployed. Quebec, with a percentage of 7·8 per cent, comes next, largely because a great part of that province is affected by the same conditions which affect the maritimes and British Columbia. Ontario and the prairie provinces are still the lowest, with the same figure of 5·3 per cent.

These figures disclose that a considerable proportion of our unemployment is not seasonal or due to local factors, but is the direct result of the loss of seaborne trade. Undoubtedly the British Columbia figures are to some extent accounted for by the abnormal weather conditions of the past two months, and it is partly for this reason that their figures are so much higher in percentage than those of the maritime provinces.

One of the extremely disturbing factors is that unemployment insurance figures seem to be used in determining the number of unemployed. It will be noted also that in the press release of the Department of Labour which gives the total of 375,600 unemployed, that figure is under the heading, "Persons seeking