

*Unemployment*

Frankly I was disappointed to find that a good portion of this debate had been taken up with political charges as to who was responsible for the last depression, and so on. I was disappointed because I feel that the problem of unemployment is too serious for anyone in this house to use it to advance party interests, or as a vehicle for political propaganda. We all know from the lessons of the last depression that unemployment causes human misery. It is a waste of manpower and results in paralysing the growth of a country. We know full well that unemployment inevitably is followed by crime, delinquency and human tragedy. Every civilized person is violently opposed to war and we strive desperately to prevent it, yet there is no other tragedy that falls with such awful impact upon any nation as depression and the conditions caused by unemployment.

Consider for a moment the matter of waste. If we take the figure of 600,000 presently unemployed in Canada—this figure has now risen to some 613,000—as our basic calculation, on the basis of a work shift of eight hours we find the staggering loss of some 4,800,000 man-hours each day, or the incredible figure of some 144,000,000 man-hours lost each 30 days of work. In addition I think it is admitted that the last depression created strains on the minds and bodies of men and women which are perhaps responsible in good measure for many of our public institutions being filled with inmates. These then are some of the effects of unemployment.

I do not intend to re-examine the validity of all the figures which have been given by the able speakers who have taken part in this debate, but I do believe those figures indicate without doubt that unemployment in Canada is neither regional nor seasonal, as has been constantly stated by government spokesmen. Even if it were there is no justification for a country such as Canada, with its immeasurable wealth, having people living in distress. There is no question in my mind but that unemployment is increasing and is creating an alarming situation.

We know that such is the case from the official figures issued by the dominion bureau of statistics, which indicate that unemployment is the highest in Canada since the last war and is becoming greater. We know further that the prediction made by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in the December issue of *Canadian Business* that the unemployment figure for the month of March would be well over 600,000 has been substantiated by fact.

I think the seriousness of the situation is best realized by comparison. In every single month of 1954 the number of unemployed

in Great Britain was lower than that in Canada. In the eleven month average for 1954 Great Britain with a working force of 23·6 million had only 287,000 unemployed employables while Canada, with a working force of only 5·4 million, had a monthly average of over 380,000 men and women unemployed. Perhaps the most revealing fact is a recent news release to the effect that government revenues have slackened, taxes are slow in coming in and for the first time since 1946 it is predicted that our finances will show a great deficit. In other words this implies sales and production are decreasing and unemployment rising.

The question will be asked, who is to blame? I know I should not be defending the Minister of Labour, the Prime Minister or for that matter any other member on the government side of the house, as they are able and dextrous enough to do that themselves. I am suggesting that by nature I feel rather uncomfortable when I see abuse and criticism pointed at individuals who are just as anxious as anyone else to alleviate unemployment. That blame should fall upon parliament collectively, which even at this late hour takes the stand that the situation is not alarming.

Of course there are those who perhaps feel sincerely that the blame should be placed upon the doorstep of private enterprise; that if only we had state ownership and state planning the picture would take a rosier hue. They do not tell us in what way switching ownership will resolve the problem. Frankly I do not think such an approach would lead to a solution of this problem. As far as I know the purpose of free enterprise has always been to produce goods and services. Labour along with industry has made a tremendous success of that task. Why then should they be blamed?

If we look about we see that the country is loaded with goods of every kind and variety. Certainly private enterprise has not failed. But the same cannot be said of government fiscal policy. As far as I can understand, the purpose of a fiscal policy is to enable the distribution of the goods and services which industry and labour have produced. In failing to do that, government fiscal policy has failed.

I think one of the great tragedies of the situation in which we find ourselves is that labour blames industry and industry blames labour, whereas in reality neither is to blame.

As I indicated a moment ago, the purpose of industry is to produce goods. The purpose of farming is to produce wheat, meat, butter, eggs and those commodities that are desired by human beings. The purpose of