

Mr. ROGERS: As my right hon. friend is aware, proposals for large public works projects come from many parts of the country in the form of communications addressed to the Prime Minister or the Minister of Labour.

Mr. BENNETT: Or the Minister of Public Works.

Mr. ROGERS: I am bound to say that some of the proposals do not merit further study. On the other hand some of them obviously do deserve further investigation, and it would seem to me most useful that when such proposals were made for public works projects, let us say of a self-liquidating character, they should be referred to the national employment commission for further investigation. I doubt if it is possible in advance to indicate more precisely the type of public works program that will be either referred to the national employment commission or voluntarily brought by it under its investigation. As has been pointed out, many proposals for public works projects come from members of parliament. I can recall for instance a number of projects, said to be self-liquidating, that have been brought to my attention in the last few months. It is quite possible that engineers of certain of the departments, such as the Department of Public Works, may be able to determine their merits by investigation, but I think it is important that you should have some body which could consider these projects in relation to what has been done before, and in relation also to long range plans of development.

Mr. BENNETT: That displaces what has been heretofore done, namely, referring the matters to the engineers of the various departments and receiving their reports.

Mr. ROGERS: All that information will be utilized. As a matter of fact the national employment commission will have entirely at its disposal the engineering facilities of the various departments.

Mr. BENNETT: One is responsible government and the other is not.

Mr. STEWART: The Prime Minister indicated that supplementary estimates would be brought down providing for a program of public works of fifty, sixty, or seventy-five millions of dollars.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Oh, no, not all public works.

Mr. STEWART: Public undertakings, money devoted by this parliament to works that are to be carried on, as I understand it—

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: For relief and employment.

Mr. STEWART: A certain amount is for direct relief?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Yes, certainly.

Mr. STEWART: But a considerable share of the money will be devoted to public works. I should like to ask the minister if he thinks that an estimate which is brought down here and passed by parliament should be submitted again to a commission for approval.

Mr. ROGERS: As my hon. friend is aware, in respect of the estimates to be brought before the house this session it was not possible to have the advice of the national employment commission. In so far as the dominion government will be able to enter into arrangements with the provinces for relief works during the coming year I trust we may have the benefit of the advice of the commission. As has been pointed out, the special supplementary estimates will include expenditures for direct relief, expenditures for public works solely within the jurisdiction of the dominion, and expenditures for public works to be carried on jointly with the provinces. So far as the public works that are solely within the jurisdiction of the dominion are concerned, obviously it has not been possible to secure the assistance of the national employment commission. So far as the others are concerned, as I have just said I hope we may have that assistance.

Mr. STEWART: We will assume that a municipality, a city, decides to embark upon a program of public works, perhaps the improvement of its utilities. It secures the approval and cooperation of the province in that undertaking, and the plan is sent down to Ottawa. Are we to understand that the whole matter would be subject to review again by this commission? It would seem to me that if any such procedure is adopted the minister is only inviting a lot of trouble and a lot of difference of opinion, and instead of helping to secure the result which he desires I am afraid the commission will be an obstacle. It will lead to friction, misunderstanding and delay.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: Would my hon. friend adopt such a course if he were administering the department?

Mr. STEWART: I do not understand the question asked by the right hon. gentleman.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: The point is this: I think my hon. friend might assume that the present Minister of Labour will exercise as much judgment, wisdom and discretion in what he refers to the commission as my hon. friend would exercise if he were the minister. It is easy to put all sorts of imaginary questions, to assume the minister is going to act