

Inquiries of the Ministry

LABOUR CONDITIONS

ALLEGED COMMUNIST ACTIVITY AMONG CANADIAN SEAMEN

On the orders of the day:

Mr. J. H. DICKEY (Halifax): Has the Minister of Labour any information with respect to recent communist activity in inciting unrest among Canadian seamen, and among officers, engineers and wireless operators of the Canadian merchant marine?

Hon. HUMPHREY MITCHELL (Minister of Labour): In reply to the junior member for Halifax I would say that efforts have been in progress to bring about an agreement affecting the personnel of the deep sea ships. The classes of personnel were unlicensed men and executive officers, engineers and wireless operators. The department has given conciliation service through the good offices of Mr. Justice McNiven of Regina, who for many weeks in Montreal endeavoured to have the parties concerned reach an agreement. I can only say that an agreement was reached as far as the unlicensed personnel were concerned, but unfortunately that has not been possible with respect to the executive officers, engineers and wireless operators.

I should add, Mr. Speaker, that as far as my knowledge goes, during those negotiations there was no evidence of communist activity. However, since the strike there has been picketing of ships which is hard to account for, because it is obvious that there are not sufficient officers involved to form the picket lines. This fact has led to the assumption by many people that there is a communistic activity, but I have no evidence at the moment that such is the case. I consulted the officials in charge of the R.C.M.P. and they have no evidence of communist activity other than the well known fact that the communist party has made statements in support of the strike.

UNEMPLOYMENT

SUGGESTED PAYMENT BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF SHARE OF RELIEF COSTS

On the orders of the day:

Mr. W. R. THATCHER (Moose Jaw): I should like to ask the Minister of Labour a question, of which I sent him notice earlier. In view of the unemployment in certain sections of Canada and the increased number of people on relief, has the government given consideration to paying a share of the relief costs, as was done prior to the war?

Hon. HUMPHREY MITCHELL (Minister of Labour): The answer is in the negative. I am sure the hon. member knows the employment—

[Mr. Howe.]

ment figures as well as I do. According to the last report, roughly 200,000 people were registered for employment out of a total of just under 5,000,000, the highest employment figure in the history of the dominion. I think my hon. friend will also agree that some persons are very difficult to place, for reasons obvious to everyone who can read and write. I should point in passing to the progress that has been made since the period of which my hon. friend speaks. The various governments now spend an average of about \$750,000,000 a year in social services, of which eighty per cent is provided from the dominion treasury. These embody such plans as children's allowances, unemployment insurance, old age pensions and the like. I am sure my hon. friend will agree that we are better able to face any temporary or what I might call seasonal layoffs than we have been since this parliament was first established.

LOANS TO OTHER COUNTRIES

INQUIRY AS TO AMOUNTS NOT repaid

On the orders of the day:

Mr. E. D. FULTON (Kamloops): In the absence of the Minister of Finance I should like to direct an inquiry to his parliamentary assistant. On Wednesday of last week I asked the minister a question about the repayment of Canadian loans and credits to various countries. I repeated the question on Friday, when the minister said he would let me have an answer on Monday. I would appreciate it if his parliamentary assistant would bring the matter to the attention of the minister and ask if I might have an answer tomorrow.

Mr. R. W. MAYHEW (Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Finance): The minister is absent today on official business. I shall bring the matter to his attention and try to get the answer for the hon. member tomorrow.

WHEAT

PRAIRIE FARM ASSISTANCE—OVERPAYMENT UNDER WHEAT ACREAGE REDUCTION SCHEME

On the orders of the day:

Mr. F. S. ZAPLITNY (Dauphin): On February 27 I asked the Minister of Agriculture a question respecting certain regulations under the Prairie Farm Assistance Act. At that time the minister indicated that he would reply at a later date. I wonder if he is able to reply today.

Right Hon. J. G. GARDINER (Minister of Agriculture): If I remember correctly the questions asked were the questions I stated