

The Address—Mr. Diefenbaker

to speak in terms that would almost lead one to believe, unless his earlier statements were accepted, that he was. During the weeks ending April 10, April 17 and April 24 the unemployment situation—and they are the latest figures available—showed an encouraging improvement. Unplaced applicants fell by 14,500 during the week ended April 10 compared with the previous week. In the week ended April 17 the number of unplaced applicants fell by over 28,600. That was more than the corresponding figure for the previous year which was only a little over 17,000. Again in the following week, the week ended April 24, unplaced applicants fell by nearly 36,000 compared with a corresponding figure of 26,000 the year before. I want to be perfectly fair in that connection. The figure of unemployment, of course, is greater today than it was a year ago. But there is a material change. Ever since the statement was made by the Minister of Labour that unemployment was bought, to use the expression of my hon. friend, there has been a continuing improvement as I have now shown.

What other action do we intend to take? We intend to take action to extend the field of public works in a development plan to which I will make reference in a moment. We have already advanced large sums of money under Governor General's warrants. I presume that there was an inherent criticism in a suggestion made by my hon. friend when the Minister of Finance referred to it today and there was an observation by him in connection therewith. We acted in that connection.

Canada has had through the years a basic problem of recurrent seasonal unemployment. I am not saying that the unemployment situation today is altogether in that position. But to the end that something be done in order to meet that problem in the days ahead my hon. friend the Minister of Labour intends to have a conference of leaders of industry, labour, commerce and government to consider recommendations regarding the basic problem of recurrent seasonal unemployment.

In addition to that there is to be a revitalization or reorganization of the national placement service in order to provide the greatest possible opportunity for the assurance of jobs. Then there is monetary policy, increasing the amount in the hands of the individual so that the individual will buy; immediate action in connection with seasonal benefits. These are some of the things that we have undertaken. In addition to that, there is an employment plan which will assist national development.

I was glad of one thing. My hon. friend has ridiculed the idea of vision countless

times. He spoke of igloos. But today he said that the development of Canada is to the north. That is what we in this party have advocated, namely the development of our great resources, the expansion and development of our north country, the building of a railroad as provided into the Great Slave lake area, roads to resources, the opening of areas such as those referred to by the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) with all his experience; in other words, the laying of the foundation now for that concept of national development which was for so long in cold storage in so far as the northern areas were concerned.

I say that this is no time to cry havoc, something which will only accentuate fears which become cumulative. Pessimism breeds pessimism. This is a time for action on the part of government, business and labour, a time to give leadership, to hold down costs and prices. This is a time when Canadians as a whole must realize that greedy grasping will put an ever tightening rope around the neck of economic recovery. So long as there is unemployment, so long will this problem face us.

This is a problem of grave seriousness in the free world. It is apparent in the United States with its vast number of unemployed. Already among the free nations in Europe there is the commencement of an unemployment cycle. This is what Lenin predicted as the end of our system of free enterprise. The major challenge today by the U.S.S.R. is in the economic field. The rate of growth of the soviet economy, unless the free world expands its productivity, promises to double that of the nations of the free world within a period of a very few years; and by a few years I mean less than ten years.

What action are we taking? My hon. friend spoke of trade. Canada's trade in recent months has shown a nearly stable trend of exports with declining imports and a substantial reduction in the over-all commodity deficit. Merchandise exports from Canada amounted to \$1,092 million in the first quarter of 1958 as compared with \$1,119 million in the same period of the year previous, a decline of only 2½ per cent. Go anywhere in the free world and find how much greater has been the decline. There is declining activity in the United States. Softness in world commodity markets has resulted in lower sales in a number of leading export items including base metals, newsprint, wood-pulp, oil seeds and petroleum.

On the other hand, the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Churchill) has gone to work on this problem and I want to say that one of his major accomplishments has been