

Supply—Labour

Mr. Starr: Mr. Chairman, in view of what the hon. member has said I wonder whether at this point he would permit me to make an observation by way of clarification. It is true that in previous years the Canadian Labour Congress in its brief asked governments to convene such a conference. We acted on that suggestion in 1958. However, when the Canadian Labour Congress president addressed the board of trade in Toronto it was on a different matter altogether. He appealed to the government to establish a conference on labour-management relations.

That is the only point I wanted to clarify. I am sure the hon. member would not intentionally wish to leave the impression that a conference on unemployment was what the president of the congress requested at that meeting.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Labour is quite correct in part when he says that in the speech President Jodoin made he referred to labour-management problems along the lines the minister himself mentioned. I do not have the speech before me, but I will send for it. In the first or second paragraph of that address there is a sentence which clearly indicates that the congress would like a general conference. What Mr. Jodoin undoubtedly was thinking about was the proposal made by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance that in the face of the serious competitive position in which Canada finds herself in the matter of external trade there ought to be some stabilization both in terms of price and in terms of the income received by individual groups. Labour took the position that before acceding to that kind of arrangement it ought to have the opportunity of discussing the matter with the government.

Certainly there is nothing that has a greater causative effect in terms of unemployment than does this particular aspect of the whole problem. In any event, does the minister not think that a conference with the provinces, a conference of labour, industry and management, and the establishment of a parliamentary committee would represent a wise course of action to see if we could not clearly establish in our minds some satisfactory appreciation of the serious unemployment picture that confronts Canada at this time?

Surely the government ought to recognize that it is expected now to take vigorous steps in order to cope with this problem and to satisfy the Canadian people that it is alert to the situation. It can no longer take the position that was taken in 1958, that the situation is temporary and is going to improve. That is not the picture we have seen

during the past two and a half years. We are now told by the research experts of the government that there is not likely to be an improvement in the situation in 1961 and 1962. We have urged that the government should do what was done in 1936; that it should go out and enlist the services of a leading Canadian figure, one who has a knowledge of production and employment problems—

Mr. Graffey: Mr. King called our 1936 plans unconstitutional.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I am referring to the Purvis commission which was appointed by Mr. King.

Mr. Pearson: That was before the hon. member was born.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The government ought to enlist the services of an outstanding Canadian figure with broad experience in production and employment to give leadership and bring about a co-ordination of the efforts of government and industry to see whether by ad hoc measures something could not be done to provide people with work. I do not know if the Minister of Labour has examined the report, or if my young hon. friend who takes the matter so lightly has troubled himself to examine it.

Mr. Graffey: I just said that Mr. King called our 1936 plans unconstitutional. I do not take the matter lightly at all. I was merely stating the facts. Why does the hon. member always refer to my youth? I point out to him that I was elected to this chamber by the people of my constituency.

Mr. Chevrier: But the hon. member takes things lightly in this house.

Mr. Graffey: I do not. Why does the hon. member for Laurier also insist on referring to my youth? I have as much right to sit here as does the hon. member, even though I am young.

Mr. Chevrier: The hon. member is not interested in unemployment.

Mr. Graffey: I am interested. I want the facts.

The Chairman: Order. May I just remind the committee of standing order 12, paragraph 3, which provides that when an hon. member is speaking no other hon. member shall pass between him and the Chair or interrupt him except to raise a point of order. I would ask hon. members who want to make interruptions or put questions to seek permission from the hon. member who has the floor.

Mr. Chevrier: That ought to keep the hon. member quiet for a while.