

With regard to conditions in general in Canada, the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) declared last night that we might well listen to what the bankers had to say. It seems to me that he was quite right in that, because under the existing financial arrangements the bankers can very largely decide what the conditions shall be. If they decide that there is to be another wave of prosperity at the present time, I have no doubt that the wave of prosperity is already under way. But it may be said, nevertheless, that even they are unable to decide, under the economic conditions that prevail, whether prosperity will remain for any time. The Speech tells us that for Canada the year 1924 was a period of substantial progress. Listen to what one of the bank managers has had to say—and the Prime Minister did not quote him. Sir Frederick Williams-Taylor, the general manager of the Bank of Montreal, at the annual meeting, to which the Prime Minister did refer, said:

My view, in brief, of the situation is that business generally in Canada is unsatisfactory, but with some bright spots. This expression of opinion may not be popular, but it seems to me much better to look the matter squarely in the face than to allow ourselves to be led astray by popular delusions. That general trade is dull, to put it mildly, is no delusion. Many of our industries are running on half time, with diminished profits or no profits at all. Taxation is heavy to an extent which discourages new enterprises. The cost of living is high and our population in point of numbers is at a standstill or worse.

Here we have a frank recognition of our heavy overhead charges, high taxes and high cost of living, and factories running on half time. So far as labour is concerned, the high cost of living and half time work means unemployment and suffering; it involves in its larger social aspects sickness and crime of all sorts. Right here in the city of Ottawa we have had in recent months several cases of suicide which appear to be directly traceable to despondency owing to lack of work. Within the last few days the press has been telling us of a poor fellow who has been imprisoned in a cave and to rescue whom every effort has been made and every expenditure possible incurred. Millions of people throughout the country have been interested in his fate. Yet there are tens of thousands who are suffering to-day very acutely because of unemployment. I am not very much concerned whether the unemployment in Canada is greater than the unemployment in the United States; the fact is that unemployment exists here and we have its consequences to deal with. Last autumn a conference was called by the government to deal with this matter. That conference might

almost be described as a cruel farce. There were some fifty delegates representing the Dominion and provincial governments, as well as the municipalities, the Canadian Manufacturers Association, the Canadian bridge and construction industries, labour, the Canadian railways, and the employment services of Canada. After all these delegates had assembled, the Minister of Labour stated on behalf of the Dominion government that nothing could be done by the Dominion. He simply, as it were, flourished the British North America Act and said it was impossible to do anything. His statement included this:

If indeed, the matter were one of other than financial assistance, the participation of the Dominion government might be regarded as interference with provincial rights.

Thus a very real and pressing need is brushed aside as of comparative unimportance and we have a purely technical, legal, constitutional attitude presented. Even then the Minister of Labour might have remembered that so far back as 1920 a report on this subject of the draft conventions was submitted to the Governor in Council by the Minister of Justice on March 2 and duly concurred in by the council and approved by His Excellency the Governor General on November 6. In that report we find the following statement:

Unemployed insurance has a pronounced federal aspect and on the whole the minister thinks the establishment of a system of unemployed insurance is competent to the Dominion in the exercise of its residuary legislative power with regard to the peace, order and good government of Canada.

As I think I said last year in this House, where there is a will there is a way and where there is no will there is no way. The position of the Minister of Labour was very largely backed up by the Acting Minister of Finance (Mr. Robb). In flat contradiction to the representations at the conference of Canadian manufacturers and to the evidence submitted by mayors and responsible officials from Halifax to Vancouver, he said:

I say trade in this country is good. . . . That is the reason for unemployment. . . . There are too many people flocking to the cities. . . . There is work for them on the farms if they want work.

Where can we get with statements of that character, in the face of the undoubted evidence to the contrary? Since that conference conditions have not improved. According to the press despatches as published, we had a deputation here a few weeks ago from eastern Canada headed by Premier Armstrong in which he is reported as having stated:

That at the Sydney mines in one of the coal towns, so acute is the situation that people were suffering