

After Recess

The house resumed at eight o'clock.

Mr. CHURCH: I should like to have a reply from the minister to the questions I asked at six o'clock.

Hon. N. A. McLARTY (Minister of Labour): As I understood the hon. member for Broadview (Mr. Church), he was asking what this government was doing to relieve the tax burden on real estate. I take it that he means that we should absorb a larger amount of the relief costs. If that is so, I think he will agree with me when I say that in view of the large expenditures being made by this government upon our war effort, in view of the fact that we still have to consider the report of the dominion-provincial commission, any promise which I might make, other than merely that of consideration, would be neither warranted nor fair. The hon. member asked also what was being done to provide employment for men over the age of forty-five years. Perhaps that question could be more correctly stated in these words: What are we doing to provide employment for these men in the aftermath of the war? In answer to that question all I can say is that we are at present making every possible effort to retrain men who are over that age and who have some degree of skill.

The hon. member also directed attention to a plant in Toronto which had been closed because its export business to Europe had been seriously impaired by the war and suggested that this plant could be used in manufacturing munitions or other war material. As far as the Department of Labour is concerned, we are anxious to see employment increase to the maximum. However, the matter of whether or not this particular plant or any other plant receives a munitions order or an order for other war material is something which would scarcely fall within the Department of Labour. While I am on my feet—

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the minister closing the debate?

Mr. McLARTY: I did not intend to close the debate. If my rising now closes the debate, I would ask that my answers be waived for the present and be placed on the record later on. I did want to reply to a matter raised by the leader of the opposition (Mr. Hanson).

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the house ready for the question?

Mr. McLARTY: If the house is ready for the question, perhaps I could reply to the leader of the opposition.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the minister speaks now, he will close the debate.

Mr. GRAHAM: The minister stated that the report of the dominion-provincial commission has yet to be considered. Is he in a position to indicate when or in what manner that report will be considered?

Mr. McLARTY: I am afraid that that decision rests in hands other than my own. I am not in a position to give an answer to that question.

The leader of the opposition referred to the setting up of industrial disputes boards in connection with certain firms in eastern Canada. During the recess I have endeavoured to go into the facts mentioned by the leader of the opposition.

I must say quite frankly that this Trenton steel works' matter has been one of the most difficult problems with which I have had to deal under the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act. Three companies are involved and I believe it is fair to say that they are interlocking. As the leader of the opposition pointed out this afternoon, there is just the one union interested. Three boards were applied for, but the representatives of the employees were content to accept one board. The difficulty arose in connection with Standard Clay Products company. In this case the logical thing seemed to be to set up, not three but probably two boards.

The request was received on May 9 and immediately a wire was sent to the company asking for an immediate answer. The leader of the opposition has suggested that I should beware of the blandishments of certain individuals. I have always regarded my functions in connection with the setting up of boards under the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act as being at least of a quasi-judicial nature. In order to be strictly impartial I have endeavoured in each case to appoint either a supreme court or a county court judge. In this I do not criticize the present board or any members of it. I had thought the policy advisable because of their capacity to weigh evidence and because of the fact that they would be regarded as being strictly impartial.

When the application for these boards was received, the company's reply indicated that on March 1 an agreement had been entered into between the employees and the company, whereby the company agreed to an increase in wages of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. I shall not endeavour to prejudge the matter and say whether or not that was fair, but it was voted upon and apparently 62 per cent of the employees agreed. The agreement was not signed because