

Unemployment Relief—Mr. Harris

And this is the important part. —our ratepayers are taxed to the point of confiscation.

My constituency of Danforth is one of the greatest home-owning constituencies in Canada. The people there try to own their own homes, and in so doing, to my mind they make as desirable a class of citizen as one can have in any country. But when we find that these homes are going back to mortgage companies, and in some cases even reverting to the city itself, so that Toronto, as one year follows another, finds itself increasingly in the real estate and houseowning business through its citizens losing their equities in their homes, the situation becomes serious. I shall at once be told that relief is a matter for the municipalities and for the provinces. In an article which appeared in the *Ottawa Journal* on February 23 the Minister of Labour says, quite properly:

The dominion government is not, and has never been responsible for meeting social need as distinguished from emergency unemployment need.

In the tax structure of Toronto, examining the position of direct emergency unemployment relief, we find this situation. In 1933 the amount charged by the city to its taxpayers for the payment of direct emergency relief was only \$12,239. The province permitted the municipalities to issue five-year serial debentures for the major portion of the cost of their direct relief. The following year interest on these debentures had to be met, with the result that the total cost to be included in the tax bills in 1934 rose to \$656,467. Again debentures were issued, and again the interest on those debentures had to be provided for in the tax rate of the city, with the result that in 1935 the direct cost to the taxpayers doubled and approached \$1,390,970. In 1936, when debentures were again issued, the amount required inclusive of interest and sinking fund charges for direct relief payments amounted to \$2,381,191. The point is that we are pyramiding year by year the cost of direct relief. If, as I gather from the statements, perhaps the government would give some consideration to that portion of the relief cost which is not social services, which has not to do with the unemployables but represents direct relief to those unemployed and able to work, then I say the minister has a direct responsibility to meet the difficulty in which some 750,000 people in one great centre find themselves and the problem their representatives face in striking a tax rate for that city.

The reasons why I say it is necessary that something be done are obvious. Take build-

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ing permits, for instance. Eight or nine years ago they amounted to \$22,000,000. As a matter of fact, in 1931 the amount was still \$22,000,000. Last year it dropped to \$8,000,000. You will say at once that that has added \$8,000,000 to the assessment; but as a matter of fact the grand total of the assessment in the city of Toronto shrank in the same year by \$4,000,000, with the net result that that \$8,000,000 was taken up, and together with the \$4,000,000 we have a shrinkage of \$12,000,000. In other words, the assessment is going down \$1,000,000 a month, and while it is going down at that monthly rate the tax rate itself, which before the war was 18½ mills and two years ago was 31½ mills, last year was 34·85 mills. Unless this government takes some action to meet the direct relief situation before the tax rate is struck for this coming year, the tax rate will be one, two or three mills higher. It depends on how seriously this government takes the position in which it finds itself.

I am very much concerned about the people there who are losing their homes and are unable to pay their taxes. Speaking for the people of Toronto, I am greatly concerned that they as a city should be forced into the real estate business. Every time a quit claim deed is given the city of Toronto, it is common knowledge that the city loses those taxes, and, by thousands of feet of frontage, property is being vested in the name of the city of Toronto and they are losing possible tax revenue therefrom. At the same time I cannot remember any year during which so many buildings, many of them really good buildings, were torn down, for no other reason than the fact that people could not pay the taxes on the assessed value of those buildings. True, they make parking spaces and so on; but is it good economy to tear down really good buildings? Slum clearance? Yes. But are you going to make more slums at the same time by forcing the tax rate so high that those who have equities in their homes cannot maintain those homes and keep them in repair? As fast as you clear away slums you create more and more slums, because owners with their equities are unable to keep their homes in repair.

I do not want to be destructive in what I have to say with reference to this matter. I believe that something real could be done, and I say this to the cabinet as a whole, with that tremendous majority behind them: You went to the country with a policy of action and here and now I say to you, Put a strong man in charge of this problem of able-bodied men not being able to find work, and clothe that man with the responsibility of going to industries of every kind. He will find at the