

would be better to create employment by means of public works undertaken either by the state or by private industry.

Two years have passed and we are now at the third session of the eighteenth parliament. I give full credit to the Minister of Labour who has done his utmost to see that every part of the dominion received its share of public works. He has given its due share to the constituency which I have the honour to represent. If he recollects the visit he paid to Verdun last fall with the Minister of Labour of the province of Quebec, he will admit that he was received like a prince and that the people looked upon him as Santa Claus who was to return the following year with more public works.

But, Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether, even with the creation of the National Employment Commission presided over by Mr. Purvis, the problem of unemployment has been solved in this country. On February 20, 1936, the right hon. the leader of the opposition (Mr. Bennett) recalled that President Roosevelt of the United States had stated that even though the industrial activity of 1928 and 1929 should return, the same unemployment conditions would have to be faced, as there would still be six million idle persons in that country. The leader of the opposition added that, counting our population as one-twelfth that of the United States, we would have 500,000 unemployed to take care of.

In view of these facts, Mr. Speaker, and after re-reading the resolution of the hon. member for Winnipeg North, I must say that I am in favour of the first paragraph, which reads as follows:

Whereas it is becoming more and more difficult for older persons to be absorbed into the useful productive life of the dominion thereby being unable to maintain themselves in decency and comfort.

You will understand how painful it is for those who represent factory constituencies to observe so much poverty, misery and adversity. I remember this passage of the speech the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) delivered on the evening of the great Liberal victory, October 14, 1935:

Poverty and adversity, want and misery are enemies which Liberalism will seek to banish from our land.

I wonder whether it can be said, after three years and in spite of the commendable efforts of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Labour, that the problem of unemployment has been definitely solved in this country.

The second paragraph of the resolution reads as follows:

[Mr. Wermenlinger.]

And whereas, Canada is a country richly endowed with natural resources, capable of maintaining our whole population in a reasonably high standard of living,

I should not care to commit myself on this subject. Although I admit that Canada is richly endowed with natural resources, I think the matter is one for economists and I fear that this paragraph contains a suggestion that the distribution of the fruits of our natural resources should be attended by a system of joint ownership.

Here is the third paragraph:

This house would welcome a government declaration of policy that would bring about an immediate lowering of the present pensionable age limit of seventy years. . . .

I interrupt the quotation at this point to state that I am in favour of the appointment of a committee of this house, as in 1906, 1907, 1908, 1912, 1913 and again in 1924 and 1925, to consider possible amendments to the Old Age Pension Act, particularly in regard to the immediate lowering of the present pensionable age limit.

I stated a moment ago that those who reside in industrial centres can bear witness to the widespread poverty and confusion that is found in such places. At the session of 1936 one of the arguments brought against any change was that the advocates of a lower age limit were really preaching communism and socialism. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether our pensioned civil servants, our retired judges, our pensioned policemen, firemen and other municipal employees, workmen belonging to labour unions or other organizations having retirement funds can be considered propagandists for communism or socialism in this country. Certainly not.

Another argument was that it would be encouraging laziness and discouraging self-help. I do not wish to repeat what has been said by the hon. members who have preceded me, but it must be admitted that the institution of old age pensions has evolved from year to year in the various countries of the world and some countries have had them only since the turn of the present century. It is as recently as 1908 that Great Britain enacted a non-contributory pension system which remained in force until 1925 when a new act was passed creating a contributory system. The hon. member for Winnipeg North outlined this afternoon the evolution of old age pensions in the different provinces, which evolution is being continued by the resolution now before us, the purpose of which is to lower the pensionable age limit. Let us not forget that, in 1917, New Zealand had passed, under special legislation, a money bill providing