

*Unemployment Relief*

There is another act that comes under the administration of the Minister of Labour, and was designed to alleviate unemployment in urban centres. I refer to the Municipal Improvements Assistance Act. Surely no one will suggest that politics entered into the giving of employment under the terms of that act or in its administration. If it did anywhere else, it certainly did not in Saskatchewan, and more particularly in the city of Regina. In Saskatchewan the federal government had a representative, a Mr. Bingham, and the minister directed that employment on civic projects under that act should be under the direction of a committee of three, the federal representative Mr. Bingham, a nominee of the department of labour of the provincial government, and the city relief officer. As far as the city of Regina is concerned, those three men selected those who should be employed, and employment was given to those who were most in need of it, without reference to political alignment at all.

May I refer now for a moment to a remark made by the hon. member for Qu'Appelle (Mr. Perley). I was really surprised to hear him make reference to the former member for Melfort constituency, Mr. Malcolm McLean, in the terms in which he did. It is not like the hon. member for Qu'Appelle to use language of that sort towards a former member of this house. May I say to hon. members who are not acquainted with the former member for Melfort that he sat in this house for ten years and was a good member, that he is a student, and a cultured, talented gentleman. What is more, he served in the great war along with the present Minister of National Defence for Air (Mr. Power), and there is no one in the house who knows his qualifications and ability to adapt himself to circumstances better than does the Minister of National Defence for Air. May I ask who, a year ago, six months ago, three months ago, knew very much about air administration? The Minister for National Defence for Air selected a man whom he knew and who, he thought had the ability to adapt himself to a new department and render a national service at this time. It was unkind of the hon. gentleman to refer to other appointments, and some which might be anticipated. If we were inclined to indulge in recriminations we could go back prior to 1935, and refer to the deputy postmaster general, the deputy minister of marine, and reference was made a moment ago to a member of the civil service commission; all of these were former members of this house from 1930 to 1935, and on or about August 16, 1935, sought their present havens of refuge rather than face the electors.

[Mr. McNiven.]

I should like now to bring to the attention of the minister the plant of General Motors in Regina. That plant was built in 1928; it comprises eleven city blocks or about fifty acres in the city. If my memory serves me aright, the main building is between eleven hundred and twelve hundred feet long and from three hundred to three hundred and fifty feet wide, not including the power plant or heating plant. On the property there is another large warehouse which is used for parts. At one time that plant on an eight-hour shift was turning out 210 cars a day and giving employment to over 1,100 men in the plant, with an office staff of about 200. The plant was operated last winter and is still operating five days a week employing between 500 and 530 men, and on that basis it turns out sixty-five cars a day. It is a modern, up-to-date, well-built plant. It will be closed at the end of June, and should be very suitable for the manufacture of either munitions or aircraft. In making that suggestion I have a distinct recollection of a commitment made at the outbreak of the war by Mr. Carmichael, the vice-president and general manager of General Motors, who stated publicly that the facilities of General Motors plants would be available for war work. Here is an opportunity to give employment to large numbers of people in Saskatchewan, and at the same time render a valuable service to the nation at large at this hour of crisis.

Our province has had a most difficult time for the last ten or eleven years, but it is not doing our province any good to do as was done this afternoon by the hon. member for Yorkton (Mr. Castleden) when he said that hundreds of municipalities in our province were bankrupt. A number of our municipalities are in difficult circumstances, but to say that hundreds are bankrupt when the total number does not exceed 350 is, to say the least, an exaggeration. Then the hon. gentleman went on to say that hundreds of farmers were being foreclosed and put off their land. I do not know of any such situation. I know that for a period of four years up to about a year ago there had been only some 700 foreclosures permitted in the whole province. Those foreclosures were permitted because the farmers had abandoned their land, nobody was living on it and it was necessary to obtain title in order to do something with the land itself. It does not do my province or any other province any good to hear the assertion that there are hundreds of farmers being thrown off their land, when such is not the fact.

Mr. CASTLEDEN: Would the hon. member permit a question?