

devise some means to enable someone to spend money on something. If we could go through with the St. Lawrence waterway it would be a good thing because such an undertaking would release a considerable amount of money for construction work. However, there are other public works which could be undertaken at this time. I was very much struck with the suggestion of the hon. member for Macleod (Mr. Coote) when he urged the adoption of a housing scheme. Many skilled mechanics in our city are receiving relief and under the contemplated legislation they will continue to receive relief for months or years to come. These mechanics might as well be building houses for houses are very much needed in most of our communities. The building of houses would stimulate trade activity all along the line. Such an undertaking should be commenced not only in the interests of the workman and in the interests of the country, but because of purely economic reasons. It would start the wheels of industry going again. I again quote Mr. Keynes:

The voices which—in such a conjuncture—tell us that the path of escape is to be found in strict economy and in refraining, wherever possible, from utilizing the world's potential production are the voices of fools and madmen.

That is strong language, but it is not mine, it is that of Mr. John Maynard Keynes. I contend that the voice of an economist of his standing ought to be listened to by those who are responsible for the administration of this country. I urge the adoption of a program of further public works or some other projects which will give employment to the workmen of this country.

I understand the difficulties of the present government. They have all along claimed that unemployment was primarily a municipal or provincial responsibility. Possibly that may be true in theory; I am not very much concerned with the constitutional aspect of the case. In practice, however, we all know that the western municipalities are to-day almost bankrupt. We know the western provinces are so near the line they have had to come to this government for help in connection with the floating of their bonds. That is a serious situation and we can hardly expect those provinces to initiate public works. They have not the funds. Under these conditions I urge that if we are to have additional public works; if we are to have any greatly increased expenditure, the Dominion government will have to undertake the task.

Such a policy is essential from the standpoint of the men themselves. I think of the plight of the unemployed, the large number of single men to whom I referred yesterday and

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

the almost equally large number of married men with families depending upon them. The ordinary mechanic or unskilled man to-day cannot himself initiate things. It must be remembered that we live under a system which for years and years past has given the initiative to the group that we call the employers. They have been responsible for providing work. The men have looked to them; the country has looked to them to organize our industries, our commerce, our finance. They have in some way or another failed in the job. The result of the general depression means a failure to those at the helm properly to size up the whole situation and organize in harmony with the recent developments. These men have failed and now in the stress—the almost panic of the time—we are expecting the poor individual workman to initiate something for himself. This cannot be done. Moreover, during the last two or three years he has been just on the edge of things and has used up what little capital he had, so he has nothing with which to start. Many a man cannot even buy a railway ticket to travel fifty miles to some place where he might get work. He has not anything with which to provide for his family while he is away; he has nothing with which to buy fuel. A great majority of mechanics have been working in factories where the tools are the large machines. They have no tools of their own; they could not buy supplies; they could not provide themselves with raw material; they could not go out on a piece of land because the land is already appropriated. I should like to impress upon hon. members the dreadful conditions under which most of the unemployed find themselves to-day. If any sort of employment is to be provided, we must not expect the poor unemployed individual to provide it; we must look upon someone in an authoritative position to undertake that work, and under conditions as they prevail to-day this must be the Dominion government.

Further, may I point to the demoralization of the men that is taking place at the present time? I do not think those who are not closely in contact with the poor or with the unemployed quite realize the extent of that demoralization. It is all very well to say: "We have a fine people." I agree with that. "We come of a good stock." I agree with that. It is all very well to say: "These people took their share in times past whether in peace or war." I agree with that. But they are losing heart to-day; you can hardly expect them to keep up their courage when they are half-nourished and, worst of all, when they have lost any immediate objective,