

Miners and Steel Workers

Hon. JAMES MURDOCK (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, the government has entered into no agreement with the provinces and the various municipalities with regard to unemployment. In September last there was held in Ottawa a national conference regarding winter employment in Canada. The purpose of that conference at its outset was stated to be to decide that:

—the time has arrived when all public authorities, as well as those persons most intimately involved, whether as employers or workmen, in the problem of unemployment, should come together in conference for the purpose of endeavouring to devise a certain regularization of industrial employment, having regard particularly to building and other out of door work during the winter season.

The hon. member will find on pages 49 and 50 of this printed record of the report of the conference, which I am sending across to him, a statement of this government's policy on unemployment relief. There has been no change in that policy as there outlined. Also on page 125 will be found a statement in connection with certain proposals of the conference for joint participation as between the provinces, the municipalities and the federal government in relief measures. The conference was duly advised that the federal government could not subscribe to those proposals, although I did, as representing the government, agree to bring them to the further attention of my colleagues.

Right Hon. ARTHUR MEIGHEN (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the minister referred to a "conference on winter employment in Canada." Is that a new christening of the conference on unemployment that took place last fall?

Mr. MURDOCK: That is the actual and proper term that was, and should be, applied to the conference held in Ottawa. It was so stated in the calling of the conference, it was so stated all through the conference. The subject matter for consideration was whether those mayors, representatives of provinces and others authorized to expend public money could not devise uniform measures for so expending that money as to carry along certain work during the winter season that had formerly been held over for the summer season. It was a conference to consider winter employment in Canada.

Mr. MEIGHEN: I have the opportunity to advise the minister of a very, very bad slip. In the report of the conference on winter employment, it is described as a conference on unemployment. Perhaps he can get that slip repaired at the Printing Bureau.

[Mr. Kellner.

MINERS AND STEEL WORKERS

On the Orders of the Day:

Mr. J. S. WOODSWORTH (Centre Winnipeg): Mr. Speaker, might I ask the government if it has any definite information as to whether or not the government of Nova Scotia is actually taking any steps towards relieving the distress prevailing among the women and children in Cape Breton?

Right Hon. W. L. MACKENZIE KING (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, the government of Nova Scotia has not communicated anything to us with respect to their action at the present time. We have no information.

Hon. J. B. M. BAXTER (St. John City and Counties of St. John and Albert): Mr. Speaker, on much the same subject I desire to offer a suggestion. I do not want to talk, and I cannot talk at any length; but it seems to me that if we had an inundation in some place there would be no difficulty in all parties of this government getting together to afford some immediate relief. The conditions that exist in Nova Scotia I do not pretend to judge, and I doubt if individual members of parliament have sufficient knowledge to apportion blame on one side or the other.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order. Does the hon. gentleman desire to put a question?

Mr. BAXTER: Just a question, yes; just a suggestion, Mr. Speaker, that as hungry people are apt to overstep certain lines that we do not want them to overstep, I am going to ask the Prime Minister if he will either by an assembling of people outside of the political field altogether, or by taking a representative say from each group in this House so as to make it as representative as possible, send a commission or a committee, or whatever you like to call it, into Nova Scotia to see whether the government is grappling, or is able to grapple, effectively with the problem, and to see what can be done to preserve to Canada a great industry.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I may say to my hon. friend that I think it would be a highly improper procedure for the federal government to interfere with the affairs of a provincial government. I would think it quite improper for this government to interfere were the Ontario government, for instance, dealing with a similar situation; I would think it highly improper for the federal government to interfere were the government of Alberta or of British Columbia, or of any other province, dealing with a like situation