

Supply—Labour

After the criticisms expressed when the item was being considered last week, the Minister of Labour asked several members, who had spoken before me, "Are you in favour or not of the winter works program?"

In my opinion, Mr. Chairman, that is the type of question that could have been expected from the hon. member for Brome-Missisquoi (Mr. Graftey), but certainly not from the Minister of Labour. Of course we are in favour of any project that would provide work, even to a single unemployed. And this brings me to make a comparison. Suppose that a starving unemployed knocked at the door of the Minister of Labour, and told him: "Sir, I am out of work and hungry; could you give me something to eat?" Suppose the minister handed that poor starving man a little bag of peanuts. I have no doubt that he would take the peanuts and eat them but, of course, he would go away unhappy.

Mr. Chairman, may I call it one o'clock?

(Text):

The Chairman: Order. It being one o'clock I do now leave the chair.

At one o'clock the committee took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at 2.30 p.m.

(Translation):

Mr. Deschatelets: Mr. Chairman, before the mid-day adjournment, I stated that this country is facing an alarming unemployment crisis and that the only solution put forward by the government was a starvation winter works program. I gave my views on the subject. It is a program which barely scratches the surface of the problem. Before concluding, I should like to put on the record a few lines from two editorials published in *La Presse*. The first, dated August 11, 1959, accurately reflects my views; it bears the following title: "The experience was useless."

Either Mr. Diefenbaker is unable to learn from experience or he does not want to, which is even less excusable. His stand on unemployment is one example.

Last year he waited until fall, on the very eve of his departure for a trip around the world, to announce a program of grants to municipalities wishing to undertake special winter works projects to provide jobs for the unemployed. As was subsequently realized the announcement had come much too late.

[Mr. Deschatelets.]

This year we had expected that, profiting from last year's experience, the government would act much earlier and make its intentions known by early summer. Yet the Prime Minister did not lack for advice. As early as last spring the opposition in parliament made it a point to refresh his memory and from time to time the press reminded him that time was running out. But no program has yet been announced, no decision has been taken.

This was on August 11, 1959. Here now are a few lines from another editorial published in the February 18, 1960 issue of *La Presse* under the heading:

Is it seasonal unemployment?

Unemployment statistics are becoming increasingly disquieting. Those published yesterday reveal that 8.1 per cent of the labour force available in Canada are unemployed. Even if this figure is slightly less than at this time last year, it is much too high to be considered normal. Yet, the federal government hardly seems concerned about it. Apart from the unrealistic and ridiculous winter work program set up by the Minister of Labour, Ottawa is not coming forward with any appropriate legislation that might remedy those conditions at a time when the situation calls for exceptional means.

What is more alarming, the federal government does not seem to take the matter seriously.

Indeed, nothing is being done to remedy unemployment. Or rather, something is being done: there is some juggling with statistics, which hardly improves the position of the unemployed.

For instance, we were told yesterday that unemployment, this winter, was no higher than the average for the last few years. Isn't this the same as saying that the present situation is considered as seasonal, and therefore normal? When 700,000 people are without jobs, is that seasonal unemployment?

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would sum up my views as follows: the winter works program submitted to us by the Minister of Labour will not settle the serious problem which is now giving us concern. Government policy must be overhauled. I am convinced that the unemployment crisis we are now struggling with is the result of the disastrous monetary policy of the government: tight money, high interest rates, increased cost of living, deterioration of our export markets, lower farm income, more and more unemployment.

I say that unless the government immediately introduces drastic and urgent reforms, we shall very soon be in the midst of a depression such as there was under the Bennett regime.

(Text):

Mr. Browne (Vancouver-Kingsway): Mr. Chairman, in considering this problem of unemployment with which we are faced today, there is surely a clear responsibility on every hon. member to consider it in a realistic light. He should not try to minimize the seriousness of it. At the same time, there