

*Unemployment Continuance Act*

last fall and gave him one of these instances and asked him to investigate the case. I also wrote to the director of unemployment in Nova Scotia and called his attention to the matter. The then Minister of Labour wrote me back that it was something of a minor case; that was the adjective he used. I wrote back rather strongly and intimated that it seemed to me that the government was not doing its duty and the Department of Labour was not doing its duty if it did not see that this money reached the people for whom it was intended, namely, the needy, and that nobody else but the Minister of Labour and the Department of Labour were responsible for seeing that this money reached this class of people. We had some correspondence about it, but the result was nil. Now those instances have occurred and they still remain uninvestigated.

This is what I ask of my right hon. friend the Prime Minister. I ask, first, that these cases be investigated. If the information which is given me is wrong I want to know it, but this is the information that comes to me, and I believe it to be correct. The information has come from a number of different sources which I believe to be reliable.

I ask, in the second place, that some method be adopted by the Minister of Labour, who is responsible for the administration of this money, whereby the selection of the unemployed will be made by people who have no political interest one way or the other, such as the overseers of the poor, the clergymen of the district, a Red Cross committee. Somebody who knows who are those most in need and who are most deserving, should be selected for the purpose of saying who shall go on these jobs; for I say to my right hon. friend, whether he thinks it is the case or not, that down in Nova Scotia in a great many cases the needy and the unemployed are waiting outside the doors of the Tory patronage committee to see if they are going to get put on the job or not, and men are being taken on just under the same old organization as operates in respect of ordinary federal public works. That is, a foreman is appointed, a friend of the party. He meets the patronage committee, and they decide who is going to get the work and who is not, and they are influenced in very large degree by the politics of the various applicants. I say it cannot be otherwise so long as my hon. friend the Minister of Labour leaves it that way. All the instructions that he can issue and all the orders in council that he can put through will not stop that sort of thing, because after all what you are trying to do, or should do,

[Mr. Ralston.]

is not to deal with the matter here in Ottawa, but to reach the needy of that particular district and provide them with work and an opportunity for sustenance for themselves and their families. The people who are allowed to make the selections are in many cases not taking the instructions issued from Ottawa. So I ask my hon. friend in the first place to investigate, and in the second place to adopt a different system in regard to the distribution of these relief moneys and particularly in the selection of the men who are to receive this relief work.

I wish to deal with certain other questions.

Mr. BELL (Hamilton): Would it not necessarily happen in cases of the kind to which my hon. friend has referred, that the selections would be made by the officials of some municipal government?

Mr. RALSTON: No, not in the counties I know. I only wish that were true. The selections are made in the instances to which I have referred, I am informed, by the usual district patronage committee, the political patronage committee in the district.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): Is my hon. friend quite sure of the facts, or are his statements merely hearsay? He is a lawyer and he knows that the evidence which he has given to the committee would not for one minute be received in a court of law. It is a hearsay statement. I venture to say that the selection of these officials, if it is done in the same manner as it is done in New Brunswick, is made through the provincial government. In every case an outstanding man in the community is selected as foreman to take charge of the work. He will be a good man in whom the public will have confidence. The storekeeper to whom my hon. friend referred, if he has given a correct statement of the facts, and I am not questioning that at all, probably is a man who understands construction, and the fact that he runs a little country store does not preclude him from being capable of carrying on construction work of that character.

Mr. RALSTON: It means that other people who are just as well qualified and who need the work do not get the job.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): That may or may not be true. I am pointing out that being a storekeeper does not necessarily mean that he is not a proper man for carrying on that work. I venture to suggest that if the facts were known it would be found that the foreman was appointed through the provincial