

*Proposed Committee on Unemployment*

That was in the year 1931, when there was a Conservative government in Ontario and a Conservative government in this house.

At that time I was considered to be a great radical or red, if you please. Why? Because I was running on the terrifically radical program of a 44-hour week and, worse still, unemployment insurance. When we look back at the history of the past 20 or 23 years we can chalk up some assets and liabilities to every government we have had during that time. I am not one who indiscriminately criticizes the late Lord Bennett or any other prime minister we have ever had, because I think they did their best according to their ability. Nor would I be one who would be so ill-advised as to suggest that the Conservatives were entirely responsible for the depression of the 1930's.

As a matter of fact I have never held that view in my life and do not hold it now. I think there is a lot in this theory of the stars, astrology or whatever it may be. I do not know whether the Conservatives turn up before a depression or whether the depression turns up before the Conservatives, but you find they arrive at almost the same time in this country. Perhaps it is because the United States conservatives arrive just a little while before the Canadian Conservatives do. Our Conservatives on this side of the line are always one or two steps behind.

If we were to go back into history, it might be worth while to recall that one reason we had the great stock crash in 1929 and the depression of the thirties was the unwise and reactionary policies chiefly put in by a Conservative administration in the United States. If we were writing a brief outline of the history of this country for the past 20 or 25 years, one thing that would be unchallengeable would be the important position of labour or the increased recognition of labour in this country. I venture to say that whatever sins of omission or commission can be charged against this government, one thing that is to their eternal credit is that labour has won a position of respect in Canada which it never had before. This administration is not perfect and never has been perfect, but it happens to be the best government we have had in Canada during my lifetime, and I am pretty old.

I am not now talking only of the things for which Liberals fought for many years before they came in, and which Liberals enacted, such as unemployment insurance, family allowances, old age pensions and the long list of items which go to make up what is now called the welfare state. These things have

changed the whole economic picture in this country. I, for one, am not afraid of the gibe or the criticism of some people who might call us on this side "silk hat socialists", especially if "silk hat socialist" means the welfare state without regimentation. If that is so, then I think this government and this party should be very proud of their record.

No one can deny that the status of organized labour in this country has improved under a Liberal administration. Ordinarily the hon. member for Kootenay East (Mr. Byrne) sits to my right. I will tell you about the first time I went to the riding of the hon. member for Kootenay East. It was in the dark days of that depression when we had another type of administration in this country. I went to give a lecture in the riding he now represents. On the night I arrived in town to give the lecture the representative of a trade union arrived to try to organize a union in that great industrial city. He arrived in a car, and 15 minutes after he got out of it his car was allowed to roll over the hill. That man was out of town almost before you could say "Jack Robinson", because in those days it was almost as much as your life was worth to try to organize a trade union in this great and free Dominion of Canada. Things are different now, Mr. Speaker, because we have, and have had for many years past, a Liberal administration that really believes in the rights of labour.

I did not intend to take any part in this debate if it simply settled down into a purely "if" question, such as the degree of unemployment we have now. Make no mistake, there is no one in this whole Dominion of Canada, and certainly no one in this House of Commons whom I have encountered yet, who does not treat with the utmost gravity the degree of unemployment there is in Canada now. It is a very grave thing, and it is of the deepest concern to this party and to this government. I submit that on its own record this government deserves the continued confidence of this house and the continued confidence of the Canadian people because of the things it has done, and its treatment of the unemployment problem is one of them.

During the debate the last few days, for instance, we have had a most loose, careless statement and misuse of facts. We have heard the numbers of unemployed quoted as varying from 200,000 to 300,000, if you please, completely ignoring the fact that according to the government's own official statement there are 280,000 registered unemployed in Canada