

but also in other parts of Canada. If this is to be successful we must survey the soil, utilize the water of some of our rivers for irrigation, and drain marshlands and swamps in some other parts of Canada. This will mean, too, at a time when we may need it very badly, productive work for thousands.

There is already a great deal of unemployment. It is useless to say that conditions here are better than they are in some other countries. I do not know that that statement is true, nor would I accept it until I have figures which will prove that statement. But even if it were true, the fact is that we have to-day considerable unemployment. Figures from the Department of Labour tell us that employment increased by 170,000 between July, 1945, and January 24, 1946. It is estimated that nearly a quarter of a million are without employment now.

Let us not be complacent about this. The governor of the Bank of Canada warns in his last report to the Minister of Finance, dated February 8, that:

Looking to the future there is no reason for complacency. Most of our real problems of post-war adjustment are still ahead. The backlog of demand will not be large in relation to productive capacity when industry has been fully reconverted and inventories built up to normal levels. The prevailing optimism on the North American continent is dangerous if it diverts attention from the conditions which have to be faced.

There is too much, I think, of a prevailing optimism on the other side of the house. So far, in spite of what the mover and the seconder of the address in reply said in this regard—and may I take this opportunity of doing what I should have done earlier on behalf of my party, namely of congratulating them upon the able manner in which they moved and seconded the address in reply—so far, in spite of what they said, we believe the present administration has failed to plan adequately the reconversion from war-time to peace-time needs. Without a full employment plan, satisfactory national wage and farm policies, standards of living will be forced down and all will suffer.

Inextricably linked with reconversion and the maintenance of employment at the highest possible level are the problems of housing and of settlement of returning veterans in satisfactory civilian employment. Even veterans who wish to enter into farming operations are met with endless delays in obtaining decisions regarding the suitability of the land and sometimes, I may say, the suitability of their wives to go with them on the land. I have no doubt that most hon. members have had many cases of exasperating delays and investigations

[Mr. Coldwell.]

brought to their attention during the recess. There is a dangerous sense of disappointment and frustration abroad in this country. The red tape in the Department of Veterans Affairs and many other departments also must be cut, and cut quickly. We in the C.C.F. believe that there can be no true democracy without economic democracy; that there can be no true freedom without economic freedom. The time has passed when liberty often meant merely the liberty to starve and be homeless. We believe, further, that only social ownership of the principal means of production and distribution will permit economic security and political stability. I know the government believe otherwise. Very well, but it is up to the government to make their system work and as yet it is not fulfilling the promise made last June of jobs for all.

Closely allied with this condition is the problem of housing. Housing conditions in Canada are deplorable. They are a disgrace to a country possessing our wealth and resources. For years before the war private enterprise failed to provide adequate housing; yet the government has entrusted practically all our needs to private firms again. There is not a single city or nation that I know of which has solved its housing needs through private enterprise. Any successful programme has invariably been accomplished through a properly planned public housing system.

The government, through its Curtis report, admits that 700,000 houses are required in the country, and this is only half the number required to house the nation in reasonable health and comfort. One needs only to look north from this building to see the truth of that statement. The provisions of the National Housing Act make it impossible for the average citizen to build with any assurance that he can complete the payments on a home. No provision whatever has been made for adequate low rental houses within the reach of the low wage group.

We are told that 50,000 houses will be built this year, but there is little evidence that even this inadequate objective will be reached. Canada is faced with more than a grave problem in this respect. It is indeed a national emergency and should be treated as such. I believe the proper planning of the use of material and labour could provide this year 100,000 new houses. This would give employment, so it is estimated by those who know how to make such estimates, to more than a quarter of a million Canadian workers in all branches of the building and allied trades.

The unnecessary export of needed building materials should be halted. There is no need