

*Canadian Centennial*

time. It was a bankruptcy act passed for the benefit of farmers and incidentally it was the only one of all the Bennett new deal legislation that stood under the scrutiny of the privy council. The government of that day also passed the Employment and Social Security Act, the Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act—

**An hon. Member:** The Bennett buggy act.

**Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West):**—and the Minimum Wages Act. When some of our friends in other parties undertake to tell us that all the credit for these various pieces of legislation should go to other parties and that we are only building on the foundation previously laid by them, let me remind hon. members that the foundation for all these acts was laid back in the early thirties. Although they lay dormant for many years and were revived by the late Liberal government the fact remains that the foundation for these acts was laid by a Conservative government even before the Conservatives were "progressive".

In 1935 the Conservative government passed an act much like the one envisaged and advocated by our friend the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), an act to establish an economic council being chapter 19 of the Statutes of Canada, 1935. This reads:

His Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Commons of Canada, enacts as follows:

(1) This act may be cited as the Economic Council of Canada Act, 1935.

After setting out definitions in section 2 the act provides.

(3) There shall be an honorary advisory council on social and economic questions which shall be known as the economic council of Canada.

(4) (1) The council shall consist of the minister, who shall be the chairman, and 15 members who shall be appointed by the governor in council.

(2) The members of the council shall be selected from,

(a) officers of the public service of Canada, not exceeding seven in number, whose administrative duties require consideration of social or economic problems;

(b) representatives of organized bodies of a social or economic character, not exceeding five in number;

(c) other persons having special experience or knowledge in connection with social or economic problems not exceeding three in number.

Section 5 (1) provides:

The dominion statistician shall be the secretary of the council.

The duties of the council are enumerated in section 6 which reads:

The duties of the council shall be to discharge such duties of an advisory character as the chairman may request them to undertake and particularly, without limiting the generality of the foregoing,

[Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West).]

(a) to study, investigate, report and advise upon questions relating to the general trend of social or economic conditions or to any social or economic problem of Canada, and to authorize the investigations in that behalf as hereinafter provided;

(b) to make recommendations to promote and co-ordinate social and economic research within Canada;

(c) to make recommendations to co-ordinate the activities of a social or economic character of the several departments of the government of Canada;

(d) to make recommendations as to the organization of statistics as the basic data required for social and economic investigations;

(e) to publish such reports and findings as may be considered to be in the public interest.

I feel I have quoted enough to demonstrate that the heart of the Conservative government has always been in the right place in terms of the forward look in matters affecting administration of the affairs of the country. I do not suggest that this form of organization is what is required today. As a matter of fact I do not think it is. If an advisory council were set up I think it should be something like a royal commission. Rather than the Prime Minister serving as chairman it should have a judge as its chairman, one who would be entirely independent of political pressure. I can visualize much good that would be accomplished by such a council if it were composed of members who carried sufficient prestige in the country that their opinions would be accepted by a large segment of the population.

I am going to tie it to only one idea at this moment.

Let us consider the problem of inflation today. There might be some argument as to what inflation is, but I think most will agree on a general definition. We know that our dollar today has the purchasing power of approximately 49 cents in relation to living costs just at the close of the last war, or up to 1939, at any rate. We know that, and we can agree that inflation has taken place. From all inquiries I have been able to make and from all reading that I have been able to do I find that we are now subject to what is called creeping inflation. I am going to be careful here. Some are inclined to lay the blame for this creeping inflation at the door of labour; others blame the tycoons of finance.

**Mr. McCullough:** You are very close.

**Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West):** But wherever we lay the blame we are inclined to look upon it as it affects ourselves. It is like a story I heard. Are we allowed to tell stories here?

**Mr. Fulton:** It depends on what kind they are.

**Mr. Thomas (Middlesex West):** It reminds me of an Irishman and his friend. They