

Unemployment

on February 29. The total as of that date is 20,376, while the last total is 16,039, so there has been a reduction of some 4,000 men, and that after the announcement that the wage allowance would be increased to \$15 a month in addition to board and lodging. A reasonable inference from that surely would be that these men were going to their own homes; that they were going to some other employment which gave them a greater wage than \$15 a month with board and lodging, or that they did not wish to remain in the camps and work as they were obliged to do under the new policy.

Mr. McGEER: As a matter of fact I think anyone who is conversant with the relief camp situation knows exactly what happens every year. There is a large number of men, just about the number mentioned by the minister, who, as soon as spring comes and weather conditions make it possible, leave the camps. Most of them leave not to go to work but to roam about as adventurers and to "hit the road."

Mr. ROGERS: Does my hon. friend think those men are proper charges for this or any other government, with regard to securing employment?

Mr. McGEER: I do not say that; I am just mentioning the fact. As a matter of fact, in every year during which the camps have been in operation that very thing has taken place. If the minister will go to the foremen or to any of the men conversant with the problem he will find out the type of men who have left. They prefer to roam about the country rather than to continue in the camps, and if he will check up the statistics as to rod-riders during this particular period he will see a proportionate increase in the number of men who are roaming about, picking up work indiscriminately here and there, wherever they can find it. This is no indication whatever that there is any improvement in the employment situation throughout the Dominion of Canada this year as against last year. I venture to suggest that if the minister will check up the statistics of last year he will find that just about the same number left the camps at this time, and I venture the further suggestion that he will find that in the main they were the same men. To suggest that this is any indication that the problem is not one that will have to be dealt with next winter or that the unemployment problem is moderating of its own accord is not in accordance with the facts, and no such conclusion is justified.

Mr. ROGERS: That was not my implication.

[Mr. Rogers.]

Mr. McGEER: The implication was that these men left to go to better jobs, paying more than \$15 a month, or that they went to their homes. No such conclusion is justified. Probably the men will not be getting as much money, nor will they be getting as good shelter or as much food as they were receiving in the camps, but they prefer to leave the camps and have the adventure of moving about the country. Speaking as one who knows something about this problem in Vancouver I think every member of this House of Commons must view the situation with the greatest concern if the government is to be tied down in meeting emergencies, as apparently this measure contemplates tying it down.

Mr. HEAPS: Perhaps, following this discussion, the minister might be good enough to inform the committee what would be the position of the government in case the appropriation was entirely exhausted and further sums were required. Would it be necessary to wait until parliament reconvened in order to vote these sums?

Mr. ROGERS: I understand there is statutory provision under which governor general's warrants may be issued to meet an emergency when it arises.

Mr. BLACKMORE: There is one other thing I should like to see done; I should like to suggest that the minister assume the task of seeing that in every little community a place is provided where these people can register. Let it be the post office or some other place where, when the boys come in, they will not be insulted; plenty of them meet with insults when they come to town honestly looking for work.

Mr. ROGERS: I shall be glad to look into that.

Mr. BLACKMORE: In that way the minister will know who are transients and who are not; it will not cost much and will be a wonderful help to the boys. Then I should like to make one other observation. If the amount of money the boys will be able to make on these railroad jobs is more than the amount they could make on farms, this will put the farmers at a disadvantage in getting help. I more than suspect that this is one reason why the farmers are having difficulty in getting these men to come to work for them, and inasmuch as I represent an agricultural constituency I am concerned about this. I should also like the minister to look into the matter of helping the farmers more.

Subsection agreed to.