

And so on. It seems to me something to indicate the nature of the message is left out there. The message was, I suggest, though I have no business to do so, to the effect of asking the provinces to state what they considered their commitments or responsibilities would be or what sums of money they would require. He then goes on to state:

This we hope to do within the next ten days

One would expect that to read: "This we hope to obtain"—that is a statement of what the provinces require. My question is: will he kindly explain the purport of this message and of his intention? Does it refer to calling a provincial conference which has been suggested for the near future, or was it to ask a definite statement from each province setting forth its contemplated expenditures, so that when the Prime Minister received those statements he would be in a better position, as he says, to submit to the house legislation based upon an intelligent understanding?

As the closure has been introduced and I shall not be able to put any further question, I sincerely trust the Prime Minister will give me the information I desire in the same spirit in which I am asking it, that is of getting information in which I think the whole country is deeply interested. He can turn the question aside by some cryptic expression, but I do not think it would be appropriate. What the country is vitally concerned in today is to know what steps the government is contemplating to take care of the situation after May 1.

Mr. BENNETT: That hardly arises out of the consideration of the sections now before the house.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. Hanson, York-Sunbury): Shall clauses 1, 2, 3 and the title carry?

Mr. MacINNIS: The few words I have to say in connection with this matter I would rather utter while the Minister of Public Works is in the house, but I see he is not. I think what I have to say can be said under the matter which we are now discussing. I refer to the violation of the fair wage clause in connection with government public works in British Columbia. Unlike what has been the policy in the past, it seems to me from examples I have at hand, the government has in this instance helped in the violation of fair wage rates. As it has sent to the various organizations that work from Vancouver and that are engaged in public works carried on from that city, for their wage rates, and as it

has received them, I see no reason why it should not be cognizant of what they are. The particular matter I am taking up now has reference to contracts for wharves at White Rock and Gibson's Landing, British Columbia. This was a work in which bridge, wharf and dock builders were engaged. The rate prevailing in the Vancouver district for that kind of work is one dollar per hour, but the government rate paid on that work was only sixty cents per hour. The rate for foremen on that kind of work according to the wage scale in effect in the Vancouver district was \$1.25 per hour, but the rate for foremen which the government was paying was only 70 cents per hour. So we see that the government helped the contractors to break down the wage scale which the workers had for so many years been striving to build up. Not only that, but it seems that in order that that might more easily be done, they asked the contractors not to have different classes of workmen engaged on the job at the same time. I have here a copy of a letter from the pile-drivers, bridge, wharf and dock builders to the Deputy Minister of Labour at Ottawa, from which I quote as follows:

Re: Dominion Government Fair Wages Policy

From investigation conducted by this organization to ascertain the rates of wages paid by the Dominion government for repairs and construction of new wharves, we find that in some cases two fair wages schedules have been prepared by the Department of Labour for wharf builders, one rate of one dollar per hour, which is the established rate, and another rate of sixty cents per hour for the same class of labour.

We are advised that in order to successfully carry out this policy of reducing wages, officials have been advising all concerned to carefully avoid having pile-driving crews and wharf builders engaged on the work at the same time. This we presume was considered necessary in order that one group of employees would not be aware of the rates of wages paid to the others.

I have not much to add, but I wished to bring this to the attention of the Minister of Public Works and of the Minister of Labour. I believe that they have been advised of this situation before. I think it is a bad policy to take advantage of the economic situation to force workers who may get a few days of this kind of work to do to accept lower wages than those prevailing, breaking down the wage standards, especially when the benefit from any reduced scale of wages goes, not to the employees themselves, but to the contractors who have the contract for the work. From what I have seen of the Minister of Public Works in this house, I believe he is willing to see justice done, and I hope he will in future see that the fair wage clause in Dominion contracts is strictly adhered to.