

from a letter that I received recently from an alderman in the city of Vancouver:

I represent, as you well know, a district composed of workers of an excellent calibre from the standpoint of citizenship—skilled mechanics; men who have in better times operated thriving little business ventures but who have lately been forced to the wall; labourers who by a maximum of effort and self-denial have gotten together a little home and up to the present have succeeded in bringing up their families respectably. These men are those who do not appear in unemployment parades. They are men who will eke out their small savings to the ultimate cent before they apply for relief, and these are the men who, I assure you I am not exaggerating, call on me or phone me not singly or in pairs but sometimes as many as sixteen a day, begging me to do something to help them over the hump. And what can I do?

If the member for Victoria has any solution for this problem, if he believes that the majority or even a small minority of the unemployed are sponging on the local authorities he should make that known to the people who are charged with investigating those who apply for relief, and I am sure that they would very soon tell him that not one man in five hundred of those who come before them comes until all his resources have been dissipated.

Mr. HEAPS: Does a capitalist ever sponge on the public?

Mr. MacINNIS: They all sponge on the public. While I did not intend to say very much in connection with unemployment, as the hon. member for Victoria has brought up the question it may be well for me to touch upon it.

As the members of the house know, we met here in September, 1930, with a great flourish of trumpets in order to deal with the problem of unemployment. A certain appropriation was passed and certain provisions were made at that time for unemployment relief. In making those provisions and in allocating the funds provided by that appropriation it was stipulated that all work done would be done under the fair wage clause which applies in government contracts to government work, and through its fair wage officers the government saw to it that that clause was carried out all over this dominion. In 1931, however, we did not have the opportunity of discussing an appropriation for unemployment, and we therefore had no opportunity to stipulate what should be the conditions obtaining in relief work. As a result we find that instead of the provisions of 1930 for unemployment relief being carried out, wages were materially reduced, and not only were wages materially reduced but a great deal less work, relatively, was

[Mr. MacInnis.]

provided and a great deal more direct relief given than was the case in 1930. While we have not before us the government's unemployment policy for 1932, I assume from what I hear that no work whatsoever will be provided and that all that the unemployed will receive will be a handout from the present government.

Let me point out another thing in connection with the unemployment provisions in 1930. At that time it was the policy of the government to keep employed as many men as possible, and to that end it was provided that out of the twenty million dollar appropriation there should be paid the carrying charges for eighteen months on \$25,000,000 which the two Canadian railroads were going to spend for work and supplies outside of their usual budget. But this year, with conditions much worse than they were in 1930, we find the government taking the lead in reducing wages and in going back on the working conditions which the government employees have had for many years. For instance, I quote from a circular that was issued from the Post Office Department just a few days ago, on April 11:

The postmaster is advised that the item which for some years appeared in the estimates to cover overtime and statutory holiday pay has been deleted from the estimates for 1932-33. However, the amount provided for salaries for 1932-33, even outside of the ten per cent deduction, has been greatly reduced. These facts leave the department no alternative but to modify the regulations governing overtime, hours of duty and compensation for work performed on statutory holidays.

It goes on:

It follows that the eight-hour daily period of duty cannot in all cases be subject to a minimum spread of hours or even to two attendances.

That means that instead of a post office employee going to work in the morning, coming home for lunch, going back after lunch and then finishing his day's work, he may now be called upon to come to work, go home or lay off, come back to work and lay off several times during the day. There is no limit to the number of times that that may happen within the spread of twenty-four hours. The circular continues:

Moreover, the concession granted by the department whereby seven hours' night work and six hours' Sunday work have been considered a full day can no longer be operative.

With the number of unemployed continually increasing in this dominion, and with private organizations cutting down their working day and working week, this government is extending the working day of its employees and leaving the unemployed to be taken care of by charity soup kitchens. The bulletin goes on.