

*Proposed Committee on Unemployment*

last evening I had been trying to show the dangers of underestimating or minimizing the extent of unemployment which is facing this country at the present time. I said that even though it appeared on the figures prepared by the departments concerned that the extent of unemployment was very close to the proportion of the working force that has been put forward in the submission of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada and the Canadian Congress of Labour as a percentage which might be regarded as normal frictional unemployment.

In pointing out the danger of minimizing this problem, I think it is also fair to point out the equal danger of exaggerating the extent of the problem. Exaggeration of this situation can, I believe, contribute materially to a worsening of it. The question of confidence in the state of our economy is one which not only affects business but affects consumers and many other aspects of our economic life. Not only are investors cautious in making their decisions about investment in the future of this country, as was pointed out by several speakers in the debate last evening, but also the working people, the consumers of the country, are inclined to look to the future in making their plans about purchasing the things that they may need.

If the people of Canada have confidence in the future of the economy, if they believe that they have a reasonable chance of continuing to earn decent wages and continuing to have money to pay their bills, they are going to plan to buy the things that they need, the things that other people in this country are paid to produce. So talk of depression and economic difficulties which is not justified not only undermines business confidence but undermines the confidence of consumers and has a contracting effect upon the economy as a whole.

I believe that one of the great elements in the progress that Canada has made since the war has been the confidence that not only our own investors and investors outside of the country have had in our progress and our future but also the underlying confidence that ordinary Canadians have had in their ability within this economy to make a living and to better their lot. I think that anything that is said in the house that would undermine that confidence unnecessarily does a disservice to the advancement and progress of the nation.

This debate has arisen on an amendment to the motion to go into supply moved by the official opposition and amended by the C.C.F. group. By their amendment the official opposition call for examination of the

present situation by a parliamentary committee. This suggestion certainly has not been welcomed by their neighbours on their left, the C.C.F. group. While I would not agree with some of the statements that have been made by members of the C.C.F. group regarding the appropriateness of a parliamentary committee to deal with this sort of subject, I do think that in the present circumstances it is obviously not a practical or immediate solution to any problem that may exist. After all, Mr. Speaker, the job a parliamentary committee would do would be a fact-finding job. On the basis of the facts established, the committee would make certain recommendations.

If the unemployment situation which gives rise to this suggestion of study by a parliamentary committee is as serious as hon. members opposite have suggested, if there are 530,000 Canadians unemployed, ready for work and willing to work but unable to find work, then I think if they are satisfied those are the facts, we do not need a parliamentary committee but the situation calls for specific suggestions from them as to what the government should do immediately about it. If the facts are, as submitted from this side of the house, that the problem is one of 280,000 unemployed from our labour force, then I think all a committee would succeed in doing would be to prove the opposition was wrong. I do not think on those figures a parliamentary committee would be justified or would be likely to bring in a recommendation that the government should panic at this situation and introduce extreme measures to remedy the position. In other words, I submit that the suggestion that has been made by the official opposition is either too little or it is not needed at all.

**Mr. Fleming:** Will the hon. member permit a question?

**Mr. Dickey:** Yes.

**Mr. Fleming:** What harm could there be in having this problem studied by a committee of this house?

**Mr. Dickey:** That is exactly the point, no harm at all. I am submitting that the situation is either one which calls for particular action or it is one that does not require study by a parliamentary committee. These committees have other things to do which would be more valuable and would bring a better result.

**Mr. Fleming:** If the hon. member will permit, what other things has this committee to do at present? It has never been called to meet at this session.