

The Budget—Mr. Mitchell

Recently the hon. member for Lanark (Mr. Thompson) spoke of people crowding into the cities and expecting to be spoon-fed by the government, but the figures that I have given show very clearly that there is very little spoon-feeding being done. We can assume that the average rent in the city for the class of people doing this work would be twenty-five dollars per month, so it will readily be seen how much chance a man would have of making both ends meet when the total wages earned for relief during the year were only \$103. The amount expended in direct relief has doubled in the last twelve months. Quoting from the Child and Family Welfare bulletin for January, 1932:

Civic relief in December, 1931, showed an increase of one hundred per cent over 1930—expenditure of \$102,956.64 on 5,350 families and 14,421 dependents, against \$49,750.58 in December, 1930. This was for groceries, fuel, shoes and underwear. "Made" work, providing three days work per month for the married men was netting about \$13.20 per month per family.

Going further east, I find that this resolution was forwarded to the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Woodsworth), and I presume to the government, from Trenton, Nova Scotia:

The employees of the Nova Scotia Steel and Coal Company, Limited, Eastern Car Company, Limited, and other citizens of the town of Trenton met to consider the serious conditions of unemployment. We much regret to make these representations but the grave circumstances of the people are certainly worthy of any effort on our part.

We find that approximately 45 per cent of the families of the above named employees are in need and 40 per cent are in dire want. Men and women have not suitable clothing to go to church and other places of social interest, children cannot go to week-day school or Sunday school for the want of clothes and proper nutritious foods.

Now, sir, this is a deplorable state of living for Canadian citizens, and one which we firmly believe should not exist in Canada to-day, and we resent any method of administration which allows the same to continue.

Providence has provided sufficient food, clothing shelter, wealth and all the necessary things for human life, so all might enjoy a measure of life as life was meant to be, but what do we find to-day—men walking the streets deprived of the privilege to work while their wives and children suffer starvation. Such conditions will only create an atmosphere detrimental to Christian citizens.

The above statement is not exaggerated; it sets forth the facts as they actually exist at present, and we have endured this suffering for the last ten months in silence, but we are now compelled to make these facts known.

We make these representations to you with the hope that you will use your good offices immediately and place some work with the plants at Trenton. Direct relief is not adequate to meet the needs of the people; providing

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work is a much better method, and one that would promote human welfare which should be considered at this time.

It concludes:

We only ask for the right to work in order to live, and we believe your government has the authority and the right to grant the above request.

John C. Reid, Chairman.
Rev. P. C. Lewis.

After all is said and done, Mr. Speaker, these men are only asking what was enunciated in the declaration of the Lambeth conference, a meeting of bishops from every civilized country in the world, held in the city of London in the year 1930, which laid down the guiding principles of the faith until the next conference. The language used in this declaration, it is true, is possibly more polished than that employed by these men and women of Trenton, but it carries the same message and the same criticism of present conditions. Dealing with the present social system it says:

This change can only be effected by accepting as the basis of industrial relations the principle of cooperation in service for the common good in place of unrestricted competition for private or sectional advantage.

We gladly recognize an improved relationship between the different classes engaged in industry, and a better realization of the meaning of cooperation in service, but we cannot say that society has even yet come to believe that industry exists for man, not man for industry.

It is not the business of the Christian church to suggest technical remedies. But it is our duty to rouse dull consciences and to turn the attention of all Christian people to the moral background of the picture. It is a strange paradox that the capacity of the world to produce more than it needs of almost everything should coexist with extreme poverty in large areas of population, and the "discordance between consuming and producing power" calls for hard thinking and courageous action.

From what I have said, and I say this in view of the fact that the government has under advisement its policy in connection with unemployment relief, it will be obvious that there is a dangerous situation existing in the cities of this dominion. Only last week the firemen in the city from which I come were sworn in as special constables. We see thousands of men and women in straitened circumstances for the first time in their lives, men and women who placed their faith in thrift, hard work and honesty, and who invested the product of their thrift in what they believed were sound securities for the provision of comfort in their old age. To-day these people find the value of their securities gone. I live amongst them and I know the conditions. They find themselves out of work and losing their homes. They are in the position