

*Employment Commission*

the government. Suppose the government does not follow the recommendation—and the government is not bound to do so—what then? That phase of the situation means that the government will have to exercise its own discretion as it thinks best.

Mr. ROGERS: Is not that the case with a recommendation from any royal commission? There is no obligation resting upon the government to follow a recommendation made, and I would point out that this particular power was recommended and universally accepted by the provinces. It was adopted on the initiative of one of the provincial delegations.

Mr. BENNETT: I quite understood that from what the minister said the other day, and it would appear from the report of the dominion-provincial gathering. But in view of what has transpired since, there is nothing of that kind binding upon any province. The very first request made for direct relief in this country came from the provinces; they asked that direct relief be given. They were the people who said: We desire that this be done. I only point out that if the commission are to recommend this to the minister—and there is no power attaching to the recommendation except the value that attaches to any recommendation made by a body that has been set up by the government itself—you are back to the original position, and in any event the responsibility must be the responsibility of the government. Now, tell me this, sir: How can any commission thus constituted, of not more than seven and possibly three or five, be in a better position than the various officials of government and of the provinces with respect to conditions that should be agreed upon? You cannot make uniform conditions. The government has attempted to do that by increasing that grant by seventy-five per cent, and in doing so it has created a precedent that was very harmful, for the very obvious reason that these grants were not as much required in one place as in another. And I do sympathize with the premier of Alberta when he says that the grants were not the same to all the provinces; for all one has to do is to read the orders in council presented since the house began and he will realize that extraordinary conditions required in one of the provinces grants additional to what had already been made, dealing with another phase of the relief situation.

Therefore, whether we like it or not, we have this situation very clearly before us. We are now asked and are about to confer

[Mr. Bennett.]

upon a body selected at the discretion of the executive power to make recommendations which are not binding upon the executive or upon the provinces. Very properly one has been asked this question: Have the provinces anything to say about the appointment of the commission? The minister said that they might be consulted, but they have no power with respect to the matter. I point that out only because it is clear that there is, on the one hand, the power of recommendation without binding authority and, on the other, the power of investigation without being bound by the results. That is the story as it appears upon these records.

Now, with respect to the question of a long-range view of the subject, this sounds admirable, but the difficulty is that there is in this bill nothing that indicates a long-range view of this or any other subject. I could not but be impressed by that fact after listening this afternoon to what was said by the hon. member for Vancouver-Burrard. I myself received letters this morning to the effect that men were walking down the streets of Vancouver bearing on their backs the statement that they were denied the right to enter relief camps. And it is true that they were. I put this to the minister and to the committee: In view of the fact that the farming season is about to open, and agriculturists are looking for assistance, why was it necessary for the government to increase the pay to men in relief camps on March 1? I confess that the hon. member for Portage la Prairie, when dealing with this matter the other evening, asked a question that was in my mind when the minister made the statement. The minister said, first, we will increase the compensation to fifty cents a day, and second, we will not take any more men into the relief camps. That means two things. Those who are in the relief camps will not be anxious to get out of them.

Mr. ROGERS: But they will have to work.

Mr. BENNETT: Yes, they will have to work. But we know the kind of work they are engaged in. We know what it was.

Mr. ROGERS: But it is a different kind of work.

Mr. BENNETT: If it is in the same relief camps it will be a little difficult to make it different.

Mr. ROGERS: I assume that pay is an incentive to work. Surely the increased allowance is decidedly better as an incentive than the twenty cents a day that prevailed before.