

at that time the present, ex-minister was a minister. I do not think we can very well overlook that fact. I suppose that according to conventions he could not reveal cabinet secrets, but if he did not agree with the government in vital matters of this kind he could and should have, resigned. He spoke about the unemployment problem and I believe left the impression that it had not been seriously considered by the house. Perhaps it was not seriously considered, but that was not the fault of any hon. members in this corner of the chamber, at least. Proposals were made to the house, and discussion was either refused by the government or our motions were definitely voted down.

On March 31, 1931, my colleague, the hon. member for North Winnipeg (Mr. Heaps) moved the adjournment of the house to call the attention of the government to the distressing conditions which had arisen out of the unemployment situation. Objections were taken by the government on technical grounds. Later in the same day, upon a motion to go into supply the question was again raised, and several hon. members participated in the discussion. But, despite the growing seriousness of the situation no Conservative member or spokesman of the government thought the situation sufficiently serious to say a word respecting the unemployment problem. Where was the ex-Minister of Trade and Commerce when that discussion was in progress? He might have then, as he has done recently, called attention of the whole country to the situation. I am not blaming him for his recent action. I am glad he has had the courage to take that action, but it seems to me it might very well have been taken earlier. His action having been taken at this late period I do not think he ought in any way to minimize the efforts made by others to try to bring this question to the attention of the house and country.

Again, on this very question of unemployment, on February 5, 1934, my colleague from North Winnipeg brought in a resolution stating that:

In the opinion of this house, the government should take into immediate consideration the necessity of reducing the hours of labour of those engaged in industry, and also increase the purchasing power of the masses of our people in order that they may absorb the goods produced, thereby creating a more equitable distribution of our wealth production.

That resolution was finally accepted by the government, but I ask: What was done to implement its terms? Nothing at all. What was done by the government—and for a year after that the ex-Minister of Trade and

[Mr. Woodsworth.]

Commerce was a member of the government—to create a more equitable distribution of our wealth production? Nothing was done at that time and I submit nothing will be done through the various bills now under consideration. As the debate proceeded I have been glancing over a list I have of some motions that were introduced from this section of the house bearing on economic problems. There is the one I have referred to on unemployment in 1931 in that same year, one on unemployment insurance, which was talked out; one on economic research, which was also talked out; one on the necessity of amending the British North America Act, which was withdrawn after discussion. The Prime Minister says that we can proceed in a constitutional way, but the necessity of constitutional change was definitely brought up in this house in the very first year after this government took office. It was recognized then that it was highly desirable that we should have constitutional change. The Minister of Justice promised that we would have a conference to deal with this very matter. It is true that there was an interprovincial conference where the matter was mentioned almost incidentally, but nothing definitely was done about it, and now after five years of inactivity along that line we are told that we have to call a constitutional conference. Surely with the Prime Minister insisting on the necessity of proceeding in a constitutional way and at the same time recognizing the seriousness of the constitutional problem, he should have called that conference five years ago. At this late stage, he suggests a constitutional conference and holds up the British North America Act as a reason for not bringing in effective remedies.

In that same year, 1931, we introduced a resolution with regard to a national central bank; a resolution dealing with banking and credit, the very matter mentioned by the ex-Minister of Trade and Commerce; also a subamendment on the budget to abandon the gold standard. The ex-Minister of Trade and Commerce talks about the need for stabilization and currency reform, but in this corner of the house we have been urging that, and urging it steadily, for the last five years. Again in that same year we moved a motion on the unemployment situation; also an act to amend the Bank Act. All these were moved in 1931.

In the succeeding year, 1932, when the ex-Minister of Trade and Commerce was a member of the government, we introduced a motion for a social and economic research