

also give members of parliament an opportunity to discharge a responsibility. After all, we are \$10,000 a year men and women now, and would welcome all the worth-while work we can get to do. A committee such as this would make a sphere of endeavour available to members that could not but be advantageous, that could not but bring forth suggestions which the government might find helpful to meet a situation which is becoming worse.

We are not trying to build up fears that will bring on a depression. What we are trying to do is have parliament make a contribution now, to the end that we shall be able as a nation to compete in the markets of the world and thereby assure employment to Canadians in Canada. That is the purpose of this amendment, and it was in that spirit we moved it.

**Right Hon. C. D. Howe (Minister of Trade and Commerce):** Mr. Speaker, now that the hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Diefenbaker) has delivered his election speech we can get back to the subject of unemployment. I should like first to say that any suggestion that the government does not take the unemployment situation seriously is entirely mistaken. I agree with the hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. Gillis) that one unemployed person represents a situation that is of concern to the government, and certainly when the number gets up to its present size it is a matter of great concern to the government. The problem is what should the government do to bring about opportunities for employment, and a return to a high level of employment throughout the country.

I would say that the measure of success of a government is its ability to bring about and maintain a high level of employment. As far as this government is concerned, that is its main objective. Anything it does is directed toward giving satisfactory employment to its people and stability that will encourage growth of its industry.

In assessing the problem the first thing to do is measure it. My colleague the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg) has given you the facts, but perhaps you would permit me to run over the ground again. There have been numerous reports of late to the effect that unemployment in Canada is running in excess of half a million persons. Presumably these reports refer to figures for job applications on hand at national employment offices.

It is true that since about the middle of January this figure has exceeded half a million. However, it should be made absolutely

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clear that this figure does not constitute the number of unemployed. As my colleague the Minister of Labour has pointed out to this house, this is simply a figure which becomes available through the operation of the employment service in carrying out its task of helping to place people in jobs. As such, the figure includes people who after registration find jobs on their own while failing to notify the employment office, and also people who have jobs but are not working or are working part-time but can qualify for benefits under the unemployment insurance regulations.

On the other hand, there are some unemployed persons who do not register at employment offices but will attempt to find jobs through other means. The fact that such discrepancies exist means that these figures cannot be accepted as an adequate measure of the numbers of unemployed, even though they are very useful as an indication of general trends and also of the relative position of different localities.

The dominion bureau of statistics instituted in 1945 a survey designed to provide on a current basis essential information on Canada's labour force. This survey is presently conducted each month on a sample basis in accordance with proven sampling methods. The latest available results from this survey show that for the week ending January 23, 1954, there were 280,000 persons out of work and seeking work. In addition there were 24,000 persons who for the full week in question were temporarily laid off. Also there were 65,000 persons on short time or laid off for part of the week.

However, these three figures are not to be added up and referred to as the number of unemployed. Those involuntarily on short time, though partially unemployed, should not each be counted as an unemployed person; moreover, those subject to temporary lay-off can hardly be classed with those having no jobs in sight. These distinctions simply serve to indicate the difficulty of trying to gauge in one simple aggregate the many varied situations encompassed within the term unemployment.

As previously stated, the number of persons without jobs and seeking work as of January 23 numbered 280,000. This represents an increase of 93,000 or 50 per cent above the corresponding figure in January 1953. In other words the increase in unemployment now over what prevailed in a generally buoyant market situation one year ago amounts to roughly 2 per cent of the labour force.