

*Unemployment*

There is also the tremendous artificial stimulus—and I use the word “artificial” advisedly—of the defence program, which has poured money into the economy of this country.

I used the word “artificial” and perhaps I should not have used it, because in my time in this country—and I have been here since 1909—the state of war or the fear of war has not been an artificial state of affairs but rather the regular state of affairs. It has been during those periods that we have had prosperity, and it has been during the periods of peace that things have been depressed. May I say, Mr. Speaker, that in my opinion we are just about reaching that situation at the moment.

Yes, the employment situation is just about as gloomy as the weather is tonight outside this House of Commons. But, as I said, the government is trying to ride out the storm. It hopes the sun will soon shine; it hopes the spring will come, and that this idea of theirs that this unemployment is only seasonal will, in fact, prove to be a fact. We in this group are not so optimistic. I said the outlook was gloomy. Let me read from this news release which we received today, issued jointly by the Department of Labour and the dominion bureau of statistics. It says:

On February 17, 1955, there were 613,400 applications for employment on file, an increase of 43,900 since January 20, 1955.

Yes, it is gloomy. I have perused the press of the last day or two, and I find that according to this news item of Tuesday, March 22, from the *Montreal Gazette*, at least 7 per cent of the country's labour force is without work, which is double the usual level. The article continues:

The federation of Catholic charities, taking a 25-page look at welfare conditions in Montreal, stated yesterday that the most important immediate social problem facing the city is the “badly deteriorated employment situation”.

“The employment situation was not good last year”, said the federation, “and this year it has reached such proportions that anxiety is becoming apparent in responsible circles.”

I would that one of the responsible circles referred to were the government of Canada. The paragraph in the article concludes by saying that at least 7 per cent of the country's labour force is without work. It is gloomy.

The heading of the next clipping I have here contains the word “gloomy” and it was from that I got my text. The heading is, “Gloomy Annual Report”. The reference is to the statement of the Canadian National Railways

[Mr. Knight.]

and the article, written by Canadian Press, says, “First deficit in three years”. Then it goes on:

The report tabled in the Commons showed that gross revenues fell by about \$56 million, bringing the company its first deficit in three years—

—and so on. Well, everything seems to be full of gloom tonight.

I mentioned the stimulation which is given to any economic system by war. I hope I will not be misunderstood or misquoted when I say that, so far as the economic set-up of the country is concerned, we were lucky when Korea came along. I am not prepared to ask for or to welcome that kind of luck. I hope we may be able to work out our problems in time of peace and not depend upon the imminence of war to give us food, clothing and shelter.

The question which immediately arises in my mind is this. What would happen if we had a prospect of complete peace? I hope we are now facing that situation. Although the world is still troubled, things perhaps are not so dark as they have been. If the labour force was diverted from the defence program under a condition of peace to the creation of consumer goods, I ask you, what would we do with the consumer goods? What would we do with the people who, by their labours, produced those consumer goods? That is definitely the problem with which we are faced. If the government now with the existence of a civil defence program refuses to embark on a program of public investment, could it be expected to initiate any such thing in time of peace?

Up to the present we have had nothing but unimaginative solutions for unemployment. Once again we have seen the day of the soup kitchen, reminiscent of the Bennett regime to which my hon. friend has referred. There are cities in this country, my own included, which have had to bear the cost of relief. Relief was about the only thing the hon. member for Parkdale suggested as an immediate palliative. We find it again in the cities of Canada, including my own.

I shall have a word or two to say later about my own city and province. But the authorities there say the reason for this relief having doubled or tripled is the unemployment situation. Once again we have seen the authorities in cities in Canada telling these poor, jobless people to go off elsewhere, just to get rid of them. The hon. member for Parkdale had a great deal to say about Toronto and what it was doing. I have never, sir, had any prejudice against Toronto. However, I have in my hand a newspaper article