

be done cheaper in any other way. There must be in Canada hundreds of thousands of farmers who would like to make improvements on their farms, farmers who no doubt would have liked to do so years ago, but who could never afford it because they could not pay the necessary wages to hire men for the purpose. Now is an opportunity for these men to get cheap help with which to make these improvements. I believe that we could give employment to 100,000 men in this way, at a total cost to the government of not more than ten dollars per month per man, and when the work was done the government would not be saddled with enormous expense such as would be involved in any structure built up under a relief measure. As I say, I do not know who originated the scheme, and it is working only to a limited extent, but I believe it is capable of vast expansion and I commend it to the minister.

Mr. NEILL: The debate has got away from the actual resolution before the house. The resolution proposes steps to deal directly with the distress due to unemployment, but we seem to have got into a general academic discussion with regard to the original causes of the present situation, which is a matter that has been discussed at considerable length already in this house. The minister was courteous enough a few days ago to say that he would welcome any suggestions made by members, and while he would not, of course, guarantee to adopt them, he intimated that he would consider them before introducing the bill. That seems to me a very reasonable suggestion, and it is much more advisable than simply bringing in a bill and leaving us to criticize it without any hope of having any changes made in its provisions. I should like to take advantage for a very few minutes of that offer to mention one or two suggestions, which I hope will be found practical, dealing directly with the subject under discussion.

I am glad to see that the Minister of Public Works is here. I would call his attention to the statement made by the Prime Minister the other day, very plainly, that there was to be no federal relief work as such done this year. Now the Minister of Public Works will recall that last year his estimates were very badly smashed, so much so as to be almost unrecognizable so far as carrying out any necessary maintenance of public works was concerned. The situation was remedied when we came to unemployment relief by his doing the necessary maintenance works under the provisions of the relief fund. In some

ways it was a good idea; at any rate it furnished some work for unemployed people, and it also provided the necessary maintenance, failure to provide which would have been very bad policy indeed on the part of the department. We find this year that the situation is very much the same, only worse. The minister has practically cut his estimates to the disappearing point, possibly with the same idea in view, that he will get the necessary expenditures made out of the unemployment relief fund. A glance at the estimates will show that he has made hardly any provision for the necessary work.

This is not the place or the time to point out to the minister what very bad policy, a policy of penny wise and pound foolish, it is to neglect the maintenance of wharves and floats which have only a short life anyhow; for if maintenance is not carried on year by year it means double expense in the future to make repairs. In the meantime these public conveniences are standing idle during a considerable period of their very short life, hampering industrial development and inconveniencing the public. As the minister has made the cut even worse this year than it was last year, I want to point out to him that he is now confronted with the situation that no relief will accrue to him from the unemployment relief fund. There is to be no federal relief work undertaken, so I suggest to him with all deference that it is very much up to him to take steps to see that in the supplementary estimates arrangements will be made to carry out the most necessary public works required.

As regards other suggestions, we understand now that we are committed to a policy of direct relief only. So far as British Columbia is concerned, I have no doubt that the government will make or has made representations, and judging from the press I gather that its wishes are opposite to that. In that province the government apparently wish public relief works continued on various grounds—that it will provide work, it will not destroy the morale of the men, and some return will be made for the money spent. So far as the cities are concerned, the same view is held. Certainly the smaller cities will be against the policy of direct relief only. Not only is it better for men to do some work for the relief they are given, but the small cities have plenty of work to do and naturally they want some return for their money. If we are going to go in for direct relief, however, and whether we do or not, I want to point out to the minister that we shall have to make greater provision to help the cities. They are almost at the end of their financial resources. They have