

the membership of the United States, of Germany and of Japan. We occupy, therefore, a position of singular difficulty on the northern half of this continent, and that position has been made much more difficult by the fact that the Acting Prime Minister, in the absence of the Prime Minister, made a statement which Italians have taken as giving them succour and support—succour and support, not physical but moral, enhancing their spirit and morale at the expense of blame being attributed to British statesmen, when they had nothing more to do with it than children on the street. I made some inquiries. I spoke to Mr. Ferguson, who headed our delegation at the time, and what I have recited to this house as to the circumstances, I believe correctly represented the facts. I want to say this about Mr. Riddell. All the time I was in office he was at Geneva. He was, so far as I know, appointed, not by the late government but by my right hon. friend opposite. I think that is correct.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: By the Union government.

Mr. BENNETT: Well, he was retained in office by my right hon. friend. I was not sure whether he had been appointed by the right hon. gentleman, but I thank him for the correction. At any rate, Mr. Riddell was retained in office by the right hon. gentleman, as he was retained in office by the next administration; and the records will show that, with regard to every matter that came up, Mr. Riddell was so extremely careful about his vote that he wired for instructions to the Department of External Affairs, at times, I thought, in respect of matters which really did not necessitate such action.

Now, in this instance I believe I have correctly stated what really took place; and the fact that Mr. Riddell, in that committee, said, "Why not oil and steel?" should not have put Canada, through the humiliation caused by the statement made by the Minister of Justice, and in the position with the world, that we were really apologizing for what had been done and repudiating Mr. Riddell and his action with respect to this matter, the government of the day stating that he had acted wholly without authority. I think that was calculated at that moment to have other than a beneficial effect upon the strength of our position at Geneva.

I shall not do more than say that I agree with what the right hon. gentleman has seen fit to say, in the speech from the throne, as to the seriousness of the unemployment problem. The number has decreased from a maximum of nearly 800,000 to possibly 400,000. Seasonal

unemployment, of course, increases the number of the unemployed. The number was at one time 783,000; it fell to less than 400,000, and at the moment it is considerably larger than that by reason of winter conditions. But what is this commission going to do? I have read and re-read that paragraph in the speech from the throne and I am wondering just what this commission is going to do. At the last session of parliament we passed a statute providing for social insurance, and before we left office we appointed as chairman of that commission Colonel Harrington, who had a large experience in these matters—that is to say, in the principles involved in such matters—while Mr. Tom Moore, who was also appointed, had perhaps a wider experience of unemployment conditions in Canada than any other man in the country. These gentlemen we asked to take a census and they were organizing for the purpose of doing so. Well, all I can say is that the government of my right hon. friend saw fit to prevent this being done.

I repeat: what is the proposed commission going to do? What is the commission's power? Is it to be a commission that will have control, or is it merely to act in an advisory capacity?

The speech from the throne declares:

As a means of dealing with present emergency conditions, you will be asked, with the approval of the governments of all the provinces of Canada, to make provision for the establishment of a representative national commission, which will co-operate with the provinces and municipalities in an endeavour to provide work for the unemployed, and the supervision of unemployment relief.

Can they lessen the amount paid? Have they power and authority to determine how many shall be on relief? Have they power to appoint officers and to say who shall or shall not receive relief? Shall they have power to go into municipalities and provinces and do that? I do not know; but this I do know, that the provinces in days gone by distinctly and positively said that they would not agree to any such action; that so long as their provincial organizations existed, just so long did they themselves propose to determine these issues. And I repeat that unless a commission has power to deal with facts and not merely to give advice, to deal with realities by doing something instead of by suggesting something, that commission will not accomplish anything. It cannot, in the very nature of things.

How did we meet that matter? We met it by asking the provinces to appoint commissions, and in some instances they did so.