

*Unemployment Insurance Act*

As all of you know, I am sure, having read about it in the newspapers, a year ago in December this mill closed down. I visited that town this summer and talked to a lot of the residents. Frankly, these people are bewildered. It just breaks your heart to talk to them. They do not know what to do or what the future holds. It is all very well for the Minister of Trade and Commerce to tell the farm implement machinery workers, as he did about a year ago, "If you have not got a job, just pick up and go somewhere else." But you cannot do that. If you are a family man with six or seven children, with your house in a certain community, and the only trade you know is the one at which you have always worked, then you simply cannot just pick up and move. The people I spoke to in Marysville at that time—and I suppose it is even worse now—were in a bewildered and distraught state.

I would be interested some time to learn what the government has done and what effort it has made—I hope it has made some, and that it will reach a successful conclusion—to attract other industries to take over that mill and get that community on its feet again.

I also visited the community of New Glasgow in Nova Scotia and went down the Drummond mine, which is a very large coal mine in that province. The mine was due to close down permanently in October, so far as they could see. I was there in the latter part of July. It is hard to understand the feelings of those people unless one talks to them, because they just do not know what they are going to do. They are bewildered. They look at a future which, for them, does not exist. They are familiar only with the mining of coal, and they do not know where else to go to mine it. They know that unemployment insurance benefits are going to run out. This is the kind of future Canadians should not be asked to face. The people in these communities are good people. They want to work. They want nothing more than to work and to earn their own living so as to keep their heads above water. But, through no fault of their own, they are denied this, and to my mind it is a disastrous and worrying situation.

Surely someone must face up to responsibilities in cases like this, where unemployment is not seasonal. Quite demonstrably it is unseasonal; indeed, perhaps it is permanent. Certainly it is semi-permanent. I should like to quote briefly what was said by the late Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King with respect to this whole matter, when he was speaking before the dominion-provincial conference in 1951:

The transfer to the federal government of the whole cost of relief for the employable unemployed

[Mr. Hees.]

and their dependents is the logical outcome of the experience of the past. It would prevent a repetition of the confusion, the inefficiency, the waste, the delay and the inequalities that have admittedly prevailed in relief since 1930.

When we see families who cannot get work, but who must go on living, families composed of good Canadians—good human beings—then I say somebody must take the responsibility for them. The municipalities simply cannot do it. They do not have the sources of revenue. Because we all know that year after year the annual conference of mayors and reeves makes it clear to the federal government that they simply cannot look after the people who are unemployed in their communities and who, through no fault of their own, are unable to find work.

I believe the opinion expressed by the late Right Hon. W. L. Mackenzie King is accepted on almost all occasions by this government as being the gospel truth. On this particular occasion, however, it seems strange that the government ignores completely what their late leader advised them to do, and said should be done without any equivocation. The government has disregarded that advice.

The opinion expressed by the late Mr. Mackenzie King is also that expressed by other authorities who have examined the matter. I have in mind particularly the Sirois report, the Marsh report, and the findings of the dominion-provincial conference of 1945—all of which come to exactly the same conclusion on this question of looking after the needs of people who want to work but who, through no fault of their own, are not permitted to do so. All agree that this is the responsibility of the federal government. That has been the opinion of all who have made a study of this matter.

Despite this evidence however the government seems to persist—well, it does not "seem"; it persists—simply to duck its responsibilities in this matter, so far as the citizens of Canada are concerned.

I hope that when the minister deals with his bill later on he will explain some of these things to us, because we want to hear about them. The Canadian people want to hear. We want to know the attitude of the government toward these people. Let us remember that they are good Canadians, good citizens, human beings. They have the same needs as you and I: they need clothing; they need food; they need shelter. They have families. They are good people. They simply must not be cast adrift and be expected in some way or another to get along in some miraculous fashion.

As others have said, we welcome this measure as a partial move toward relieving