

*Proposed Committee on Unemployment*

gestions. While the government is hoping, men are going without work and still more are becoming unemployed. While the government is hoping, rents are unpaid or home owners are going behind in their mortgages. We need something more than hope; we need something more than a desire to have suggestions come out of committees. We need some action, and it would be a pleasant thing indeed if a member of the government would get up in this house and tell us what they intended to do.

The Minister of Trade and Commerce for once departed from his usual Pollyanna attitude that all was for the best in the best of all best possible worlds. He said he was anxious, and he had every reason to show anxiety. He agreed tentatively that there were 524,000 applicants for jobs. Then hurriedly he went on to say that this number cannot be accepted as right. Well, what is right and what is not right? We are told by the Minister of Labour that there are 524,000 applicants for jobs, and then the Minister of Trade and Commerce begins to tear that figure down.

Let us take for instance the figure of 280,000 men without jobs, seeking work. Even if only 280,000 are seeking work the fact remains that there are 280,000 personal tragedies in Canada. Where a man is unemployed you have a home in which there is fear, in which there is worry; and as we saw during the thirties, when you have those anxieties in a home you have the possibility of a home breaking up. But there are far more than 280,000 unemployed. The figure is nearly double that mark.

Then the Acting Prime Minister said that the increase in unemployment is only 2 per cent of the working force. I have been troubled before with ministers who deal in percentages and who do not deal in figures. The increase may be only 2 per cent of the working force but, Mr. Speaker, translate that into numbers and the increase is 100,000; and 100,000 is something vastly more frightening than 2 per cent.

The Minister of Trade and Commerce did not seem to be unduly worried at the idea of a 2 per cent increase, but he should be worried at the idea of a 100,000 increase. Yet as he said, "we have not panicked." Not only has the government not panicked; it has not done anything. The government has no solution to this problem, and they tell us, like Mr. Asquith, well, let us wait and see. We will hope that something will turn up.

We have over on the other side of the house the greatest group of Micawbers that Canada has ever been afflicted with. They are always hoping for something to turn up. Then the Minister of Trade and Commerce went on to

say that there is much similarity to 1950, when there were hundreds of thousands unemployed. When we asked the government what proposals they had to set before the country to alleviate the situation, there was no answer from any minister. Well, once again the government was extraordinarily lucky. At that time it was Stalin who took them out of the hole. In 1939 it was Adolf Hitler who solved the problem of unemployment for them.

**Mr. Howe (Port Arthur):** Something has happened to the predictions of my hon. friend each year for the last 15 years. They have not worked out as my hon. friend expected. Is that not so?

**Mr. Stewart (Winnipeg North):** Our predictions have worked out remarkably well. We have told the government they have no plans for unemployment, and it has been proved to be so.

**Mr. Howe (Port Arthur):** My hon. friend has been predicting that the government would meet disaster every year, and we have not had that.

**Mr. Stewart (Winnipeg North):** I think a very large number of Canadians are coming to believe that to have a Liberal government is a disaster, but you may as well make the best of it while you can.

The minister told us, as I said, that 1950 was different, and that had we adopted the ideas of the opposition we would have gone through an inflationary process. That might well have been so, but it was only avoided because of the advent of war. The fact remains, as the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway pointed out today, and as the workers of Canada are realizing more and more, that under the capitalist system the more wealth there is produced, the more insecurity there is for all concerned. That is a fat-headed system if there ever was one.

We have to get away from the concept that unemployment is simply a mass of figures or certain percentages. We have to realize that every case of unemployment, as I said earlier, is a personal tragedy. Unemployment is a waste of human resources, an unforgivable waste of the capital of the nation. I can well imagine what any businessman, what any chamber of commerce or board of trade would say if machinery was seen lying idle and rusty. They would object and expostulate at the waste of capital, and rightly so. But they seem to forget that when workers are not working and producing they also are rusting, they also are idle. The capital of the worker is his ability and his time, and when he sees those things deteriorating or disappearing in front of his eyes he loses that which is of vital importance to him.

[Mr. Stewart (Winnipeg North).]