

*Unemployment*

Indeed, there was an awkward question asked only the other day down in the province of Quebec. I quote from *Le Devoir* of Monday, March 21, where Jean Marchand, secretary-general of the Catholic federation of trade unions, had this to say:

(*Translation*):

Our governments are in the act of demonstrating that communist countries alone have no unemployment problem. How is it that the only statesmen who seem able to solve this problem should be people like Hitler and Stalin? It does not make sense.

(*Text*):

And Mr. Marchand goes on to suggest that no one would dream of leaving such affairs as the army or the postal service in the hands of private enterprise, because they are too essential; but when we come to consider the economy of the country we adopt a policy of laissez-faire and, he says, evidently with disastrous results.

I could wish that more of Mr. Marchand's labour colleagues, both French and English speaking, had such a grasp of the realities of the situation; because they are suggesting this, that if you cannot make this system work you have got to make way for something better.

One of the reasons blocking any activity on the part of the government, one of the reasons that no proposals are made from government benches, is that they are still sunk in some of the myths of free enterprise. They are still pretending that our economy is composed of a vast number of little, private free enterprisers, all busily engaged in their own businesses, and by that means improving the condition of all of us. But of course, as we know, that is not the kind of world in which we are living today. The kind of world in which we are living today is one of vast, enormous and powerful economic organizations which are not responsible to this parliament, nor controlled by the parliament; vast aggregations of wealth and power which decide just how much Canadian workers are going to get to live on, which decide the number of hours they are going to work and consequently the number of them who are going to have jobs. These are the realities of this so-called free enterprise system. Their behaviour was quite well characterized by Mr. Justice McRuer, in speaking only a few days ago on the conviction of the ten electrical equipment firms who were found guilty of operating a combine. Mr. Justice McRuer remarked on the way in which the public is entitled to free competition except in so far as it may be interfered with by valid legislation. I quote from the newspaper report:

He recalled Mr. Robinette's contention that there was no allocation of business nor restriction on technological advances.

The chief justice said that if a company developed a superior type of cable, its price would still be controlled by the group.

Not only the price of that commodity, but the wages paid to the men who produced that commodity; not only the wages paid to them but the number of hours they are going to work, and therefore the number of them that are to be employed in that industry are controlled. These are the real seat of power in our society today. That is true not merely of the electrical industry. It is true in practically all the basic commodities of industrial life today: aluminum, oil, timber, pulp and paper, nickel, heavy machinery, milling of grain, processing of food, and retail distribution. I hardly need drive home that point. There is not one of us who has not noticed a new Loblaw store going up every week. We know that distribution is being concentrated in the hands of a few, and numbers of people are going to pay for it at their cost. The number of people who are to be employed in distribution, the conditions of their work, all these questions are decided, not by this parliament, not by this stronghold of democracy, but by groups of people whom we do not know at all and over whom we have no control.

I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Canada are not forever going to be put off with the suggestion that they should pay this as a ransom price of our liberty, as suggested by the young man I quoted earlier who suggested that it would not be wise for the government authorities to go to the unemployed and tell them that their miseries were the ransom price that they were paying for liberty, because he suggests that the human being with the least possible liberty is the unemployed person. They are going to demand from this government some serious thought with regard to this economy that no longer functions, because it cannot be said to function adequately, when operating almost at full speed we have thrown over 600,000 people right outside the economic machine. We have discarded them. We have told them that we do not need them; that we can operate the machine without them. At the same time we tell them the only way in which they can acquire the goods they require for living is to have a job, but there are no jobs for them. It is too bad. The implication is that they have to die, to get out of our sight because they are a problem to the government; they are a problem to those who own and control our economy.

We in this group have often been accused, Mr. Speaker, of being impractical and of being visionaries, of advancing Utopian ideas. But I suggest to you, that there is no more