

Unemployment—Mr. Heaps

America Act grants certain jurisdictions and creates certain lines of demarcation between the provincial and the federal governments. I am almost sick and tired of listening to definitions of the British North America Act. Every time a social question of importance is brought before this house the British North America Act is trotted out to show that we cannot do a certain thing. I am beginning to think that instead of calling it the B.N.A. act we should call it the B.A.N. act.

An hon. MEMBER: Explain.

Mr. HEAPS: As I have said on a previous occasion, the British North America Act was made for the people of the Dominion of Canada; the people of Canada were not made for the British North America Act.

Within the last few days this house has been very busy in making friendly gestures towards the people to the south of us. I have no objection whatever to friendly gestures being made to people in other parts of the world; in fact as a member of the Labour party I always try to cultivate kindly feelings between the people in different parts of the world. But if we can make friendly gestures which will cost the national exchequer of this country about \$10,000,000 per year, then we can afford to make a friendly gesture to the unemployed people in the Dominion of Canada. My constituents are to a very large extent men or women who have to work for wages; if they do not work they cannot eat, and to them this question of unemployment is a very vital one. Am I to go back to my constituents at the end of this session and tell them that parliament sat by idly while they suffered? Am I to tell them that no action is to be taken with regard to this very important question of unemployment? Parliament could well afford to devote its time and energy to doing something for the people of this Dominion in order to alleviate the conditions which some unfortunately now find themselves in. I realize that the government have done something in regard to finding work. I am now accepting the statement made by the Prime Minister (Mr. Mackenzie King) to a delegation from the western provinces which waited upon him a few days ago when he said that the government was going ahead with public works as fast as it could and that the Canadian National Railways were doing the same—a few men being laid off but otherwise the work proceeding as if everything were normal. That, however, does not begin to touch the question of unemployment in the Dominion. The government have not dealt with unemployment in a direct sense; they have merely pre-

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vented it from getting worse than it is at the present time. I want to see parliament take some action that will deal with this question which arises year after year, because hardly a year goes by without this question of unemployment coming before parliament in one form or another.

The average workingman to-day is not the same as the workingman of twenty or thirty years ago. He is beginning to study; he is studying economics and when he is out of work he wants to know the reason why. That is a phase of the matter which we cannot lightly pass over. He sees that all around him are the material things of life. He himself has produced all the things that go towards making life worth while; but suddenly he finds himself out of work; he is face to face with poverty and in many cases does not know where his next meal is to come from. In parliament we protect practically all our industries, all our financial institutions, and the working people would like to know why we cannot give some protection to the workingman. When I use the term "protection" I do not use it in the sense of increased tariffs; I am using it in an entirely different sense. The workingman has the right to security in life in exactly the same way as we give security to capital.

Mr. IRVINE: How does the hon. member propose to do that?

Mr. HEAPS: I will come to that in a few moments if my hon. friend will permit me to continue my argument.

We give, for instance, protection to our railways; we almost guarantee them a certain fixed return on their capital. We give certain concessions to our banks. We give tariff protection to our industries, but what does parliament give to our working people? Practically nothing at all; and to-night as a representative of the working people of Canada I want to try to impress upon parliament the necessity of our doing something on their behalf.

Why, in the first place, is a person employed?—and now I am coming to the answer to some of the questions put by the hon member for Wetaskiwin (Mr. Irvine). A person is employed because his services are required in order that the employer may profit from his labour. If a man cannot be gainfully employed, his services are, generally speaking, not required. In periods of depression labour cannot be gainfully employed; hence we have the unemployment problem on our hands. We do not have unemployment periodically as we used to have it many years ago, but it is an ever-recurring problem year after year. Why is it a recurring problem? Years ago it was