

Proposed Committee on Unemployment

with the employable unemployed. They are left on the hands of the municipalities and the provincial government.

I hold in my hand a letter which I received from the Vancouver presbytery of the United Church of Canada, dated November 27. It enclosed a resolution, and this is the prayer of that resolution:

The Vancouver presbytery of United Church of Canada urges that appropriate steps be taken by federal and provincial governments to implement in principle the recommendations of the policy statement on social assistance adopted by the governors of Canadian Welfare Council in their meeting of December 13, 1952, that provision be made for the payment of social assistance to indigent employable unemployed persons.

This is one of the difficult problems of the municipalities. They just have not the means to meet this situation that has been aggravated tremendously by the increased number of unemployed.

I hold in my hand a news item which appeared in the *Vancouver Province* of February 5, ten days ago. It reads:

Deputy police chief, Gordon Ambrose, today blamed unemployment—which is far worse than most people realize—for the recent minor wave of burglaries, safecracking and armed holdups.

Chief Ambrose said that the people police are arresting for these crimes "are not newcomers". But criminal types unable to find employment are "hungry" and thus become more active.

I can tell this house that hunger is a very potent urge, and hungry people—and there are many of them today—are going to get the means to buy what they need even if they have to commit crimes in order to do so. As a matter of fact I was reading in a Montreal paper a few days ago that in that city people were committing crimes so they would be put in jail where they could get food and shelter.

I suggest to this government that they should have known this situation was coming, because the conditions which we are meeting now are as old as the industrial system itself. We have had to deal with it periodically for the last two hundred years. There is nothing new in it; there is nothing strange about it. But it appears that we have not learned how to deal with it. If the government were to be ready for this situation, I suggest they should have been preparing not now but ten months or a year ago. There are, however, a great many things the government could do to help the unemployed if they would only take the trouble to find out about them. They could be doing these things while they are getting ready a program of public works in case the investments which they have been telling us about do not materialize.

This situation of falling markets and increasing unemployment is not something

[Mr. MacInnis.]

that is confined to this country alone. It is taking place in almost all industrial countries, and it is sort of contagious. When it develops in one country it makes it difficult for that country to trade with other countries, and so unemployment goes from one country to another as smallpox might go.

I say it is the proper function of government at a time like this to do these things for the people which the people individually are not able to do for themselves. One of the things which the people individually are not able to do for themselves is to provide employment. That will have to be the function of the government, and while they are preparing work programs they should provide adequate maintenance. We should get busy and help out the municipalities and the provinces in providing reasonable standards of food, clothing and shelter for the unemployed until employment can be found. The longer we delay, the more trouble we are building up for ourselves. We ought to get that clear in our minds, and get to work at once.

Mr. F. G. J. Hahn (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed very much the pleasant discourse of the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. MacInnis). I concur in his realistic view that this is a problem of today and not one of the distant future. However, I find myself in the paradoxical position of also agreeing with the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra (Mr. Green) in so far as I also consider this to be a problem covering a period of years, a seasonal problem, and that therefore a committee to consider the whole thing may be most desirable.

Coming now to the particular remarks of the right hon. Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Howe), I was pleased to hear that we had sold some wheat to Brazil for the first time in several months. It will certainly help the prairie farmers to a considerable degree. A loosening of the purse strings in connection with investment is a most desirable feature, instead of continual defence spending, although we probably cannot forgo the latter because we may need defence spending in the not too distant future. The construction of the St. Lawrence seaway is indicated to commence later in the year, but it will not assist us today.

There is one feature of this debate which I found very amusing. I refer to the fact that many of those who have spoken from time to time have complained that the newspapers were quite frequently at fault, that they were being misquoted, that things were not being said in the newspapers as they should be said. However, I noticed that