

To the extent that we are not able to have jobs for everyone when they want them, provisions are made for tiding these people over periods of unemployment.

Recently we have taken some important steps in increasing the economic security of those unemployed. During the past winter, for example, the Government established a minimum period of ten weeks for those on winter supplementary benefits and brought the rates up to the full rate of benefit. This did much to help during the winter stress of heavy unemployment. The Government has recently introduced a bill to fundamentally amend the provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Act.

These revisions will make this fundamental piece of social legislation an even better weapon with which Canadian workers, with the co-operation of employers and the Government, can defend themselves against the hardships of unemployment.

Much thought has been given to the plight of those who are unemployed and who have no insurance or other means of support. While their total number is not great, there have been cases of severe individual hardship over the past winter. As you know, a joint federal-provincial approach is now being developed to deal with this problem.

As the theme of this session of your annual meeting suggests, our primary emphasis should be on employment and not on unemployment or the provision of assistance. I am able to report that employment is increasing and will likely continue to increase over the coming months in view of the recent signs of improvement in the economy.

Looking into the future, I think it is reasonably safe to say that manufacturing employment will reach at least last year's level by early summer - that the construction industry will employ more men this year than last - and that employment will continue to increase in our primary industries.

Employment will also continue to rise in services, public utilities, finance, insurance and real estate. One of the few black spots appears to be in the transportation and related equipment industries.

I do not want to suggest that employment problems in all industries will completely disappear over the coming months. Some manufacturing industries in particular, will continue to feel the effects of stiff competition. I do, however, look for a marked improvement in employment and this should mean that unemployment will be reduced to more manageable proportions.

I have frankly tried to explore with you some of the employment and unemployment problems which face Canada today. There are no easy answers to these problems, either for the Government or for employers and workers.

Nevertheless, I think you will all agree that constructive solutions require the gathering of information and its careful analysis by the most competent minds we can find. It is with this objective in mind that my Colleague, the Minister of Finance, recently announced that a Royal Commission would be named to explore the future development of the Canadian economy.