

Unemployment

Then we have another situation which has a direct relationship to the position in which we find ourselves. I have a clipping here from a newspaper which indicates that when the United States attempted to get a waiver under the Geneva agreement the Minister of Trade and Commerce, the Minister of Finance and the Secretary of State for External Affairs went to Washington as fast as they could to see what could be done about the situation. They knew full well that such action would have an effect on the Canadian economy as well as on Canadian agricultural products going to the United States or into world markets. But apparently, according to the article and according to the statement of the Minister of Trade and Commerce in this House of Commons, they were defeated over there if they put up any tremendous fight to have Canada's position verified and supported in respect of those agreements. Consequently we find today that the United States has now been allowed legally to do under GATT things which formerly they were doing perhaps quite illegally and in breach of the Geneva agreement.

The whole situation is one of indifference on the part of the government. Not only did it not see fit to protect our people in the post-war period so they could buy back the goods they were producing under adequate price controls, but it has left the farmers in a position in which their incomes have drastically deteriorated. This fact has been effective in decreasing employment in those industries which depend upon farm purchasing power.

I would like to put on record figures to show the fall in farm income, a condition which is largely due to the prices the farmers receive for their products, rather than to any lack of production. According to the figures issued by the dominion bureau of statistics it is estimated that the drop in net farm income last year was \$400 million. In the three-year period from 1951 to 1954 there was a drop from \$2,150 million to \$1,200 million, or 44 per cent.

This can have only one effect upon the Canadian economy. When we western members came to the House of Commons and tried to advance the idea that we should have adequate floor prices for farm products, that a national livestock marketing board should be set up, with guaranteed parity prices for farm commodities, in effect we were promoting an idea which would be beneficial to the whole economy and would give us a type of stabilization for all our economy at the same time.

What has happened is this. Last year we saw 6,000 workers in the farm implement

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industry without work. They sent a delegation to Ottawa. I sat in on the conference when they met the Minister of Trade and Commerce. At that conference the minister told the workers, when they asked where they were going to get jobs, that they would have to go to other places and find them. The result is that these people have been looking for jobs; they have been going from pillar to post in search of them.

In all major industries there has been a decline in employment. According to the figures of the government's own bureau, the dominion bureau of statistics, there has been a drop of 11 per cent in employment in the clothing industry, 11 per cent in the railway equipment industry, 11 per cent in the automobile parts industry, 17 per cent in textiles, 17 per cent in primary iron and steel, and 20 per cent in farm machinery.

I feel that if this government were to undertake a program—not just an emergency program, but a long-term plan—to put our people to work, it could be done. That should be a program of full employment, but with this dominion government taking the responsibility it agreed to take in 1940 when the British North America Act was changed, when it undertook to bring in unemployment insurance. As a result of that change I maintain the federal government took the responsibility for unemployment in this country. I say the responsibility rests with the federal government.

There are a number of plans by which the government could make a real beginning. So far as I am concerned I welcome any increase in unemployment insurance, or any enlargement of its scope at this time. The government has been remiss in its duty in failing to undertake a program as the necessity has arisen, by which our people could be properly employed.

This, however, has not been done. We know what is the immediate problem, and I do not think it is sufficient to wait until we have a dominion-provincial conference, worthy as that may be, because when that conference is called there will be dickering back and forth between the provinces and the dominion not only in connection with jurisdictional rights but also in connection with grants. Then the provinces will have to go back to their level of government and begin to carry out some plans. What I want is something begun by the federal government right away. I want them to take the responsibility at this moment, and to begin herewith.

One of the things they should do—it might mean a change in the budget proposals, or the bringing in of supplementary estimates; I do