

Proposed Committee on Unemployment

people will be let down by the Liberal party in respect to unemployment in 1954 just as much as they were let down by the same party in 1929 and 1930.

I was very interested in a statement made by the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Philpott). He referred to the Liberal government having plans with respect to the unemployed or the underprivileged of the nation. I am not sure just what he did say, but I know he said that their record was the finest in the world.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Regier: That statement can definitely be challenged. I think we have very slowly begun to adopt the lessons that have been taught us by the northern European nations in the matter of unemployment and social security. In fact I am not even sure that we have a finer record than our good neighbour to the south of us. I have reason to believe that our record compared with theirs leaves very much to be desired.

Mr. Philpott: Will the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Regier: Yes, certainly.

Mr. Philpott: Surely the hon. member is aware that our neighbours to the south of us have no family allowances and no old age security without a means test.

Mr. Regier: If the hon. member for Vancouver South will look at the payments to old people south of the border I think he will find that they are much larger than ours, and that these larger payments were made at an earlier date. I am also not sure that it is so very sound to eliminate the means test, from the point of view of helping those who need help. I admit that it may be a good policy to eliminate the means test, but not so far as helping those who need help is concerned.

The statement was also made that the speaker was quite content to allow the government to wait to get the true facts. I can remember a prime minister of Canada speaking over the radio a number of times when I was a young man and was very much concerned about the matter of employment. He was always referring to this thing called prosperity around the corner. I used to wonder in what kind of merry circle he was leading us, and what kind of round corner it was.

When I hear repeated statements that with the warm sunshine everything will be all

right, I begin to wonder how that is going to put food on the dinner table for the people of Canada now. I come from a riding that is especially vulnerable to unemployment. On either side are the two large industrial cities of British Columbia, and whenever these industries have reason to shut their doors the people in the municipalities in my riding are affected immediately. I should like to point out particularly at this time that if we should again have a period of unemployment I hope more definite help will be forthcoming to those who are charged with the responsibility of municipal government. When you have a municipality where 90 per cent of the people are wage earners and those people are unemployed and cannot pay their taxes, the municipality is faced with sometimes insurmountable difficulties. I hope something will be done to make sure that municipalities will not be again placed in the position in which many of them found themselves during the period of the hungry thirties.

I noticed also that a considerable attempt was made to justify the government's attitude towards unemployment by referring to so-called labour leaders supporting the government. I am going to leave unsaid the things the working people of Canada would say to former writers of labour's charter of human rights and to labour leaders who never belonged, but pretended to belong, to labour's organized political party and who are now actively supporting the government.

I had thought, and I believe most Canadian people thought, that since 1929 we had arrived at a period in Canadian history when the government of Canada had assumed a great measure of responsibility with respect to unemployment. The attitude now seems to be reversed. It would seem that the government does not assume responsibility for unemployment. In fact I think a statement made on another subject can be aptly applied here, namely that the government has no views on unemployment.

I know the people of Canada returned the government at the last election, and that they have a big majority in the house. However, I should like to remind them that the high and mighty attitude that has been so evident on their part during the past week or so, the attitude that they can do what they like in the house, has led to the downfall of many a government in Canadian history, and may well wipe out the fortunes of the Liberal party in Canada once and for all at the next election.