

*Supply—Labour*

Prime Minister to one other proposal we made, and that was that the government had not given any consideration to the proposals made by the president of the Canadian Congress of Labour that the government should sponsor a conference of industry and labour to try to deal with this problem, among others.

The Prime Minister's reply was that no consideration had been given, although the labour congress had first proposed it in their memorandum of a year ago when they met the cabinet. They renewed it again when they met the cabinet a few weeks ago. That was a proposal which was repeated in a board of trade speech in Toronto by the president of the Canadian Congress of Labour, when he urged the government to call management and labour together to discuss some of the problems which are vital not only to labour and management but to this whole country.

I am going to remind the government again of these proposals to which we in the Liberal party attach considerable significance. First of all, we urge the government to consider that the magnitude of this problem now is of such a character that the primary responsibility should be taken from the Department of Labour and transferred to the government as a whole. I have seen a reference that the minister took this suggestion as a slight on him personally. It was never so intended nor was it ever so expressed. It ought to be possible to discuss these questions without references to the persons concerned. But this problem now has reached great proportions. The Department of Labour is not equipped on any count to cope fully with this problem. The problem belongs to the government as a whole; to the Minister of Finance, to the Minister of National Health and Welfare in whose department, by the way, are trained individuals who have great experience in this very matter; to the Department of Defence Production, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Labour of course, and to the Bank of Canada, whose governor stated some views with regard to this matter recently. It is inconceivable that the government should seek to have this problem resolved simply through the instrumentality of one department and one minister.

Then we proposed, second, that the government should establish a national advisory board on economic development, automation and employment to help deal both with the present problem and with its long term aspects. We propose that such a board should be made up not only of the appropriate representatives of government but of representatives of labour, industry, agriculture and the universities, and that this body

should really examine the economic aspects of the problem and see what effective steps might be taken, effective steps, at least to anticipate this problem in 1961 and 1962.

Then we suggested, third, that this house should establish a special parliamentary committee to assess the facts of unemployment and explore ways and means of dealing with the problem. What is wrong with that proposal? That proposal was made in 1955 by hon. gentlemen opposite, in particular by the present Secretary of State for External Affairs, then a private member of this house sitting in opposition. He was supported by the present Prime Minister and Minister of Labour. At that time we had unemployment serious enough in that one year—it had not been on a continuous basis from year to year—and that proposal was made by hon. members opposite in an amendment to the motion to go into supply. I now say to the Minister of Labour, to the leader of the house, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, how can they sit in their seats day after day and refuse to implement something they themselves proposed?

I call upon the government to establish now a parliamentary committee on unemployment. There are many things that such a committee could do. If there is a confusion of figures, although I do not think there is, this committee could examine them and could determine the right standard of measurement if there is any doubt. It could examine whether or not this winter works program really has put 33,000 people to work, or whether it has only put a very small number to work in addition to those who normally would have been engaged on projects which municipalities would have pursued in any event.

Then we also proposed that there should be called at once a conference on unemployment between the two senior levels of government. This is a problem which we were told could only be resolved by co-operative action on the part of both provincial and federal governments. That was a proposal made in 1955 by hon. members opposite. They called upon the prime minister of the day to discuss this matter of unemployment with the provinces. Incidentally that was done, and it was at that conference that the public assistance program was discussed and ultimately adopted and introduced into this house. That proposal was made by hon. gentlemen opposite, including the Minister of Labour, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, and the Minister of Veterans Affairs, for whom I have the highest regard, as of course I have for all the ministers in their personal capacities.