

*Unemployment—Agreements with Provinces*

say had been made to the provinces, that the federal and provincial governments should cooperate to place some of the unemployed on farms in Canada. In that connection I would like to quote from a little book which recently came to my notice, entitled *The Cause and Cure of Unemployment*. The author is John S. Lennox, an engineer in the United States who graduated from Queen's university some years ago. It is rather significant that to-day so many of our engineers have taken to the study of economics, and some of them have put in writing their opinions as to the cause and cure of unemployment. I may say very frankly that if we would charge some of our eminent Canadian engineers with the study of the financial question, it would not take them very long to evolve a better financial system than we are trying to work under at the present time. In regard to the farm problem Mr. Lennox says:

There has been no general recognition of the fact that farming is the only business in which a man can procure food and shelter when receiving no wages. Until the tax collector and the landlord can no longer be put off a farmer can stay in business. The lower selling prices go, the more produce he must market, even though he is selling at a loss. The hired man will work for his board and enough to keep him in boots and overalls. Truly, agriculture is the great unemployment sponge.

With reference to the remark that the hired man will work for his board and enough to keep him in boots and overalls, I might relate to this house a sentence or two from a letter which I received from an Alberta farmer last summer. I must remind the house that the letter was written last August when the weather was very hot. With reference to the statement by one of our leading statesmen that he was not afraid of the farmer starving, this man stated in his letter, "Of course the farmers will not starve; we still have milk and potatoes, but the clothes we bought in more prosperous years soon will be worn out, and we may have to resort to rhubarb leaves." There is much more in this booklet I should like to read to the committee, but I do not think I should take the time.

In conclusion I should like to say to the Minister of Labour that if the dominion and provincial governments are justified in cooperating to place unemployed people on farms, surely there is every justification for these two governments cooperating to keep the tax collector and the mortgage companies from putting farmers off the land. That is what is going to happen unless something is done to forestall that action. What is the sense of allowing these men to be forced off their farms? They will simply go to the cities to

[Mr. Coote.]

take the places of the unemployed whom the two governments are now endeavouring to take from the cities and place on the land. I do suggest to the minister that this is one of the most necessary things for agriculture to-day; otherwise some farmers are going to become charges upon the country. They will have to drift into the cities and receive direct unemployment relief.

Mr. YOUNG: I cannot understand the mentality of a man who will strenuously oppose a ten per cent reduction in salaries and wages, and in the same breath advocate a policy of monetary inflation the immediate effect of which would be to cut in half all salaries and all wages.

I can agree with my hon. friend this far, that the present depression will not lift until we have discovered the fundamental causes and removed them. I agree with him there, but the immediate problem before the committee to-night is what to do with our unemployed who do not know where to sleep, who do not know where their next meal is coming from, and who do not know where they are going to get clothes with which to protect themselves and their children from the weather. These people cannot wait while our economists, our statesmen and our politicians debate as to what is the cause of the trouble, and try to agree on a remedy. They must have action and immediate action. I cannot support the policy of creating great public works at the present time out of the public treasury for the purpose of giving people employment. Take, for instance, the suggestion made to-night of a trans-Canada highway. The principal objection I see to it is this. If we were to construct such a highway and by that means give employment to so many thousands of people while it was in course of construction, once it was finished, after the depression had lifted, we should find ourselves saddled in perpetuity with the expense of maintaining it, which we know from experience would run into millions and millions every year. We cannot afford any such undertaking.

There is a plan being operated at the present time to a limited degree in the province of Saskatchewan which I would commend to the minister. I do not know who originated it, but whoever did deserves, I believe, some credit. The plan is simplicity itself. It proposes to put men who are free to go, mostly single men, on farms, the government paying each man five dollars a month and paying the farmer five dollars a month to keep him. He is supported then in food, shelter and clothing at a total cost to the government of ten dollars a month. I do not think it can