

Unemployment Insurance

Very little remains to be said from this side of the house, in view of the remarks made by the hon. member for Peel (Mr. Graydon), who set out generally the viewpoint of the opposition. As the hon. member said, we intend to support these changes in the Unemployment Insurance Act, while at the same time taking the stand that what is being done is merely a dribble or makeshift to meet the present situation, and in no way constitutes a solution to the problem facing this country.

The problem is one which this parliament will have to face and solve if it is fully to discharge its responsibilities. Today in this country some 375,000 people have registered as being out of work; and that is an unemployment picture of challenging proportions. I realize that there has been a material increase in both the population and the working force of this country since the depression years of which we in this party have heard so much for so long. I would point out, however, that during the period from 1932 to 1934 the number of unemployed in Canada—and it was the total number of unemployed, not a selected list based on registrations under the Unemployment Insurance Act—ranged from 497,133 to 402,760. In my opinion, if consideration is taken of those who did not register, the number of unemployed now exceeds the number in 1934. Indeed, according to such information as I am able to obtain, the figures supplied by the department in connection with unemployment insurance are at least twenty-five per cent below the actual number of unemployed in this country. I am not going into the question as to who is responsible, but my mind goes back—

Mr. Martin: My hon. friend says the department admits that.

Mr. Diefenbaker: No, I certainly did not say it was admitted. Indeed, I do not quite understand why, a few short weeks ago, the Department of Labour made an order preventing the figures as to unemployment from being given out month by month. Economists agree, even though the Department of Labour may not agree, that the figures given by the unemployment insurance commission are at best twenty-five per cent below the actual unemployment figure.

I am not going to enter into a controversy as to who is responsible, and I am not going to rehash the government promises of recent months and recent years. The problem is a national one; and all of us in this house must endeavour to make our contribution to the end that this parliament will effectively meet the situation.

That was not the attitude of the opposition during the years 1930 to 1935. There was in

the dictionary no word of opprobrium that could be used which was not used at that time by those then in opposition, who now sit on the government side of the house, when they held the then administration responsible for what was taking place. We who believe in and espouse private enterprise and its preservation must meet this problem and provide a solution for it.

Unless in the days and months that lie ahead this problem is solved and not by solutions such as those which were referred to the other day by the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) as makeshift, haphazard and, *ad hoc*, our failure to meet the situation and to assure jobs will in fact mean that those who advocate the destruction of private enterprise will have their innings in this country.

You say to me that these amendments are not in their nature a makeshift proposition. I will read from what the Prime Minister said, speaking in the House of Commons, as reported at page 60 of *Hansard*. He refers in general to measures that will be introduced, and he says this:

That is why the measures which the government will take to deal with our economic problems this year will of necessity be flexible, be selective and be designed to meet special situations rather than anything in the nature of a grandiose over-all blueprint for the general economy of the nation.

The amendments are merely a temporary measure, not a solution, to meet the unemployment situation that exists; and the success of the action being taken is entirely dependent on whether unemployment is merely seasonal. For if it is permanent unemployment that this country faces and not seasonal unemployment dependent on climatic conditions, the legislation being introduced will afford no solution and will be merely a temporary stopgap.

The hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. MacInnis) in his speech indicated that unemployment is the result of private enterprise and is part of the capitalistic system. I challenge that statement. Is there any member in this house, regardless of whether he believes in private enterprise or not, who wants to see unemployment? The hon. member went so far as to suggest that unemployment is necessary to the proper functioning of private enterprise. That statement also, which is easy to make, is in fact without foundation. My hope is that we are approaching the day when we shall ultimately solve the problem of depressions and the ups and downs in the economic field. I am not a pessimist, and I am not looking at this matter from the point of view of a Conservative trying to take advantage of the situation. I am looking at it from the point of view of those who believe in private enterprise in this country. We must