

*Unemployment Insurance*

so, that he has obtained employment elsewhere. There must be a substantial percentage of people who are in this category, and in the category I originally mentioned. Therefore the number of unemployed in Canada must be well over 400,000, a figure which I think would be nearer the mark today.

I am not taking part in this debate for the purpose of trying to paint a dark picture as to the unemployment situation. There is nothing to be gained by that; there is nothing to be gained by exaggerating the unemployment situation in Canada. Neither is there anything to be gained by not looking at the true picture and seeing what the actual position is. One of the things which has impressed members during the present session is that in view of the warnings which have been given as to falling markets and prices, and the warnings and cautions which come from those who are in the exporting business generally, the question of finding work for Canadian citizens is one of the major jobs of the government, parliament and the people. I suggest it is not good enough to wait until things get worse. That is too much like locking the stable door after the horse is stolen. Unemployment should be nipped in the bud; we should not wait until it reaches unmanageable and uncontrollable proportions. I am quite sure the government will take heed of the warnings that have been given. That is the very purpose for which parliament exists—to bring forcefully to the attention of the administration any situation that may develop in the country.

I am not an expert in economics, as I need hardly tell hon. members; and there are many people in Canada who, like myself, are not economists, so this is one of the infrequent occasions on which I find myself in the majority. But speaking in a simple way as a layman dealing with economics, I believe the ordinary man in the street is asking certain questions which might as well be asked on the floor of this house now as any other time. One question has peculiar force to me, as I think it will have to hon. members generally.

It may be said that 380,000 or more unemployed is not a very large number; still it is a substantial group of our people, and I am sure the government regrets that unemployment exists even to that degree, just as we all regret it. But one of the questions the people are asking is this. Why did we have to wait until a war engulfed the world before people were able to have full employment? This parliament and this country are striving to the very limit of their ability to see that we never have another war. People are saying: Surely we do not have to have a war

so that people may find work. And of course we do not have to; because for a man-made economic recession there must be a man-made cure. The nations of the world have made great advances in science, in medicine, and in every other line. Surely the world is not going to admit that on the economic front somehow or other we are unable to keep people fully employed and enjoy a high standard of living from one end of the country to the other, short of having a war.

It seems to me this is particularly significant so far as the ordinary people are concerned. The world has been able to master so many problems; why can we not master this one? Apart altogether from the anguish, privation, starvation and suffering that come with recessions and major or even minor dislocations of our economy, there is something else we should bear in mind. Democracies generally—and I am not especially referring to Canada, because this runs all through the picture—must find a way in which to provide full employment and prosperity for their people. There never was a time when democracy faced a greater test in competition with another ideology than the present time. Another group, now comprising one-third of the world's population, a group competing with our way of life, is watching how successful the democracies are going to be in handling these periodic dislocations of our economic life. I am afraid that in the days to come many people in the world may come to the conclusion that if we in a democracy cannot master these problems, which we ought to be able to solve; if we cannot handle the periodic recessions which bring misery and poverty to our people, we have weakened our appeal for the support of those sceptical millions throughout the world who must make their choice between our free way of life and another way which is much less free. As a democratic state we should be able to show those who would follow the communist way of life that, with the maximum of individual freedom and the minimum of regimentation, democracy can provide prosperity and a high standard of living and happiness for the masses of the people.

I commend this resolution to hon. members of the house so far as its broad principles are concerned, with the details to be considered during the second reading and committee stages. I hope, as I am sure we all hope, that unemployment legislation will not be needed in the coming months. It seems to me that we have a responsibility not only to our own people, but also to democracy as a whole, to make democracy work; and to do so we shall have to provide our people with jobs, prosperity and good times.