

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: We had better continue with the other sections and when we come to the end we might with the consent of the house return to section two and make the suggested amendment.

Mr. STIRLING: With regard to subsection 2, it appears to me that the Minister of Labour is approaching in a very gingerly manner the question as to who shall be put to work on these undertakings. The subsection reads:

... so far as it may be in the opinion of the governor in council practicable and consistent with reasonable efficiency and economy to do so, for the employment of persons who being available and competent are necessarily and properly in receipt of relief.

I do not know why the government considers it necessary to hedge it round with so many phrases. Perhaps it would be of assistance to the committee if the minister would give us some explanation of the government's plans. He referred a month and a half ago to an arrangement that was under way between the government and the two transportation companies. I think references have also been made to other works of a similar kind. Would the minister tell us how these arrangements are proceeding and to what extent he expects that it will be possible to transfer men from the present relief camps to these work camps?

Mr. ROGERS: Some days ago, in answer to a question put by an hon. member from Vancouver, I stated that the terms of the agreement between the Department of Railways and the railway companies were being discussed. I am not in a position to go further than that at this time. As a matter of fact it will be quite obvious to hon. members that that agreement between the Department of Railways and the railway companies will have to come under the provisions of this measure when finally passed, the relief act of 1935 having expired on March 31. The house is already aware that under the proposed arrangement some ten thousand men now in relief camps will be taken by the railways and used on deferred maintenance work during the summer and autumn months. In the past there has always been a reduction of the camp population during the spring and summer months. The latest figures suggest that such a reduction has taken place this year, though not by any means to the same extent as during the past summer, that being due without question, I believe, to the larger wage allowance which has been in operation since the first of March, and also to the fact that it has been announced that the relief camps themselves will be closed by the first of July. In due

course we shall be confronted with the arrangements that will be made during the winter months in connection with single homeless men. I prefer to cross bridges when I come to them; but there is this much to be said, that under the new relief camp policy these men, whether they go from the camps to the railways or immediately from the relief camps elsewhere, will at least have some stake for their reestablishment.

Mr. STIRLING: Deferred pay.

Mr. ROGERS: Yes. I am speaking now of those who will be working on projects in the relief camps; and those who will work on deferred maintenance on the railways during the summer will have accumulated enough to carry them through the winter. Whether they will do so or not is, of course, beyond our control.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I wish to ask two questions. In the first place, what steps are being taken to safeguard the regular maintenance of way men? Will these newcomers compete with them in any way. The other question is this: Are any steps being taken by the department to force men out of the camps at the present time—I have had complaints to that effect—that is, to get rid of them as quickly as possible on almost any pretext?

Mr. ROGERS: To answer the questions in order, in the first place it was understood as between the dominion government and the railways that the normal maintenance work which would have been undertaken by the railways in any event in accordance with their existing budgets would be continued during this summer. That is to say, the normal maintenance work is not interfered with in the slightest degree under this proposed arrangement with the railway companies.

Mr. WOODSWORTH: In that connection would the lower wages paid the relief men tend to substitute relief men for the men normally engaged in that work?

Mr. ROGERS: There is no reason to think that will be the case. A representative of the Department of Labour has been conferring with representatives of the railway companies and we are taking every reasonable precaution to see that proper conditions will be established for these men who will go from the relief camps to the railways for this extra gang work. As regards the second question, I think I can assure my hon. friend that there has been no policy of forcing men out of the relief camps since the first of March. It was indicated very clearly that, particularly in