

Supply—Labour

a lavish standard of social security in this country that we are becoming the envy of our Pacific neighbours?

We hear of Russia today, but Russia is merely the name for a great conglomeration of nations representing Asiatic races for the most part. It is for us in Canada to put our house in order, and not to go so far with social security measures that the rest of the world can never catch up with us nor share with us in a spirit of peace and goodwill among men.

Mr. MacInnis: I have heard some amazing statements in this house during the time I have been here, but I have never heard anything to equal that made by the last speaker. Does that mean that this country is not to take advantage of its natural resources; the skill of its people and the technical knowledge that we have, to make as high a standard of living as possible for ourselves? Does the member for Cariboo consider that the working people of this country have too high a standard of living now?

An hon. Member: No.

Mr. MacInnis: Well, that is what he said; should we take steps to see that our standard of living is reduced. I do not think we have really begun to make use of the resources of our country to create the standard of living for our people which our resources could make possible. Anyone who takes the time to read the press from day to day, can note that some people in this country have a high standard of living; that is so without a doubt. But he can also note, that there are hundreds of thousands of people in this country who are living below a minimum standard of subsistence. Is the hon. member proposing that we ought to go slow on improving those low standards? As I said before, I have heard some amazing things here, but nothing ever to equal that.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. member for Cariboo was of course speaking for himself.

Mr. MacInnis: Of course.

Mr. Mitchell: Last year this government spent \$700 million on social services. I can give the committee a breakdown, if they desire it. I have a vivid recollection of conditions when I was an apprentice boy, if hon. members will forgive this reference. We used to start work at six in the morning and work till 5.30 at night, with a half-hour for breakfast and dinner. We received the princely sum of seventy-five cents a week. To those people who want the good old days I say: Let them have them.

An hon. Member: Including the hon. member for Cariboo.

[Mr. Murray (Cariboo).]

Mr. Mitchell: I do not think there is any limit to the possibilities of this nation. I think we compare favourably with most other countries in the world. We are among the best countries in the world having regard to the broad general standard of living that exists in Canada. I hope that we shall continue to progress in that direction. I say that with the utmost sincerity. If anybody wants the standards that obtain in Soviet Russia, let him have them. As I have said before, if low wages and poor social conditions are to be the yardstick of national prosperity, let these people go and live in the Orient and see what it feels like.

Mr. Gillis: The vote of \$58,205 is for the purpose of maintaining in the minister's department a small staff which handles the business of international conferences. I should like to find out who attends these conferences, how the personnel are selected and to whom they report when they return.

Mr. Mitchell: In the first place, as hon. members know, ever since I have been Minister of Labour I have endeavoured to get the co-operation of the organizations of both the employers and the employees on boards and with regard to everything in my department, in order to get a broad crystallization of their views; but of course, in the very nature of things, you cannot always accept their views. When a labour delegation goes to the ILO we get representation or an adviser from the four major labour organizations in Canada; they are the Catholic syndicates, the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, the Canadian Congress of Labour and the running trades. Then on the employers' side we get representatives of the Canadian Manufacturers Association, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the construction industry and the railway industry. All these persons are nominated by the organizations concerned. I ask them for nominations. I draw the line at some people, however.

Mr. Macdonnell (Greenwood): University men.

Mr. Mitchell: No. I draw the line at those people who do not believe in our way of life. That is the method that is used. What I have endeavoured to do since I have been in the ministry is to have an organization that looks after the international aspect of the affairs of the labour department.

Mr. Gillis: What I should like to ascertain is this. Recently there was a conference in Geneva?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes.

Mr. Gillis: It was on safety in coal mines. That was the purpose for which the conference was called?