

*Unemployment*

glad to have the minister speak from his seat. We can hear him just as well that way—and that is the way the Minister of National Health and Welfare speaks most of the time, anyway.

I would say from the attitude of the Prime Minister and the government in ducking away from this problem and in refusing to face it, and from the Prime Minister's refusal to speak on it—although he has been challenged and asked and urged to speak, to outline the government's plan in the matter—I would say that all these things show very clearly that this government and the Prime Minister are not interested in the slightest degree in solving the present critical unemployment problem. And the Minister of National Health and Welfare as well as every other cabinet minister knows that perfectly well.

**Mr. Martin:** We do not. And you know that is perfect nonsense.

**Mr. Hees:** I know it happens to be the fact, because if it were not the Prime Minister would have called weeks ago an immediate conference with the provinces. Therefore all we can conclude, in the Prime Minister's own words—and again it is very pleasant to be able to quote the Prime Minister—

In a country such as ours there should be work for everybody. If we cannot manage to organize the national economy in such a way that there is work for everybody, then we are incompetent.

Today there are 600,000 unemployed. The Prime Minister says that if we cannot organize the economy to make work for everybody we are incompetent. Obviously this government is incompetent. The Prime Minister has admitted it and, Mr. Speaker, there is no honourable alternative for the government and the Prime Minister but to resign.

**Mr. Colin Cameron (Nanaimo):** Mr. Speaker, I have been disappointed several times this afternoon when the most voluble member of the cabinet has been content merely to interrupt opposition members and not to place before the house the program of the government with regard to unemployment. One can only conclude that the government has no program, in which case it would be well advised to repress the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) and prevent him from making the rather rude and ill-mannered interruptions which, thus far, have had to go as the government's sole contribution to this debate on the question of unemployment. They have passed up every opportunity.

No doubt throughout the country we shall hear that the government is seriously concerned about unemployment. But no cabinet

[Mr. Hees.]

minister has got to his feet yet in this debate to offer any sound ideas as to the solution of this problem. As a matter of fact I have some sympathy for them, and a great deal of sympathy for the members of the official opposition, because within the philosophy of the Liberal and Conservative parties there is no solution, and they know it. That is why they are sitting tight.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that in many respects our present situation with regard to unemployment is much more serious and more ominous than the situation that prevailed during the hungry thirties. Even though we have not yet the body of unemployed or the volume of misery, there are certain aspects of the present situation that are, as I say, much more ominous. In the thirties we had a large volume of unemployed and a tremendous volume of human misery arising from the fact that our economic machine was almost running down. In many areas it had stopped completely, and in most areas it was seriously retarded.

But that is not the situation today. The situation today is that our machine is running almost at the same level it was last year. There was, true, a great decline in farm income to the extent of some \$600 million. But on the other hand there was a great increase in salaries and wages amounting to \$300 million, and an increase in interest, dividends and rents of nearly \$300 million. As a matter of fact the net decrease of personal income in 1954 over 1953 was only \$36 million, and the decline in gross national product was only 2½ per cent over the previous year. And yet it has produced this really quite dangerous and serious problem of unemployment to the tune of over 600,000, or nearly 15 per cent of our working force.

That is the question the government and the official opposition have to face, the fact that their method of economy just is not working. And people are going to ask awkward questions, very serious questions. They are not going to be put off by any suggestion that the statistics are misleading, as we are told so often. Maybe they are misleading; but if so, then it is the government that is doing the misleading, for both sets of figures come from government organizations. And I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the unemployed are not going to be very well satisfied by being dismissed as misleading statistics. They do not think of themselves as misleading statistics; they think of themselves as flesh and blood, men and women, with the problems of men and women. And, as I say, they are going to ask awkward questions.