

Proposed Committee on Unemployment

goods, or at least some of them, must go hungry until that is cleared off the market. That is all it means. I would like to know if the government is not ignoring the problem of those industries which are encountering difficulties in adjusting to a more competitive situation in both the domestic and foreign markets. What are they doing? In these circumstances what is the government doing that is of value to those people who are now unemployed?

Then the minister said:

Nevertheless, I feel that it would be a mistake to draw a gloomy picture for the economy as a whole solely on the basis of the situation in which certain industries find themselves at the present time.

And then I find my genial friend the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott) reported in the *Montreal Gazette* of February 12 in respect of an interview following joint representations by the executive of the Canadian Congress of Labour and the executive of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada. The newspaper article states:

"While we should not bury our heads in the sand and say everything is fine," Mr. Abbott declared, "we should be careful and not paint too gloomy a picture, because I do not think it is justified.

"The plans of people with regard to business can be affected by too much talk of rising unemployment and a possible recession.

"I think we should be a little careful about taking too gloomy a view about the prospects".

At this point Mr. Bengough, president of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, butted in and said:

"I think there are 530,000 out of work. The situation is serious".

To this the Minister of Finance replied:

"I would not say the situation is serious. I would say it is unpleasant. There certainly is higher unemployment than we would like to see."

Whether the situation is serious or unpleasant depends entirely on where you are situated; whether you are at the gate of a factory looking in, or sitting in your living room with a glass with something to drink in it and a pipe and a book in your hand.

Mr. Abbott: I said exactly the same thing to Mr. Bengough. I said that for the man who is out of work it is always serious.

Mr. MacInnis: Well, the *Gazette*, as usual, did not print it all.

Mr. Abbott: That sometimes happens in these periodicals.

Mr. MacInnis: That is the situation. If these people who are unemployed do not draw attention to that situation nothing is going to be done for them. It is only to the extent that they holler, that we holler and

everyone they can get in contact with can be made to holler that this government or any other government will take steps to relieve their distress.

Let me continue with what the Minister of Labour says. At page 1448 of *Hansard* he is reported to have said this:

This leaves the problem of what is being done to assist those out of work, whether seasonally unemployed or otherwise. Actually, a great deal is already being done. The extended coverage of unemployment insurance during the last few years, plus the provision of supplementary unemployment insurance benefits during the first three and a half months of each year, has done much to help ease the burden of unemployment.

But we were doing all that three, four and five years ago. Unemployment insurance came into operation in 1941, and this is 1954. But at the moment we are dealing with a situation that has come about in 1954, and what we are asking is, what is being done to meet that situation? The minister went on:

This year benefit payments will be even larger.

The benefits will be larger because there are more unemployed. I continue:

This sum would not be offsetting income losses due to unemployment were it not for unemployment insurance. Many unemployed workers are also being assisted by family allowance payments and by old age pensions. In addition, the provincial and municipal governments are making social welfare payments which benefit those in need.

I never heard such quibbling with facts. The minister speaks of family allowances. Those people were receiving family allowances when they were employed, and the people who are employed today are receiving family allowances just the same as those who are unemployed. It was never intended that family allowances were to be put into effect to help the unemployed; they were put into effect because even with full time employment their incomes were not sufficient to give them a reasonable standard of living. How can it help them, or to what extent can it help them, when they are unemployed and have to live on either the unemployment insurance at \$24 a week or nothing at all? The old age pension was not provided for people who are unemployed. They are unemployed, of course, because they are not employed in the sense that they are no longer able to work. Let us not try to throw sand in people's faces in regard to this problem. It is far too serious for that.

Then the minister goes on to say that the provincial and municipal governments are making social welfare payments which benefit those in need. I believe one of the reasons the problem is so serious is that during the period of good employment the federal government stopped assisting municipalities