

*Relief and Agricultural Distress*

hard that he saw the end of slavery in the United States before his life was tragically cut short in the president's chair years after. So I say to this government and to the Minister of Labour that this problem is ours. It is our job and a bounden duty we must discharge to hit it hard, hit it soon, and hit it often.

But the employment commission's report does not deal with all the major matters which are confronting us in this respect. Low wages have had a most undermining effect upon our morale and upon the condition of the people. Surely it is not expecting too much of a young and promising country such as this to see to it that everybody in the land shall have a decent living wage; that they shall have decent homes in which to live, a goodly measure of life's blessings, and some security in their old age. But there is no help for the low wage man in the national employment commission's report. I say to the Minister of Labour that people of that unfortunate class richly deserve something more at the hands of the government.

Before I come to a discussion of unemployment insurance and a national minimum wage scheme, I desire to make reference to the phase of the report which was a majority recommendation, advocating dominion administration of relief. As I said in the earlier part of my address, there are difficulties, serious difficulties, in respect of employment in some parts of the riding which I have the honour to represent. I notice that the report of the commission goes so far as to recommend in general terms that something more should be done by the dominion government towards taking a fair share of the load of responsibility of relief payments; it goes so far as to suggest that relief payments might be taken over by the dominion government in cooperation with a national unemployment insurance scheme. I am quite conscious of the possibilities in regard to the national government taking over the entire cost of relief. I can see, of course, possibilities perhaps of extravagance in administration. But surely it should be possible in Canada to place adequate checks on such a course and to see to it that the dominion government bears its proper share of the relief burden in this land, following out the terms of the report of the national employment commission. If these safeguards can possibly be made, the dominion should see to it that the municipalities are relieved of the burden which they are now struggling to carry.

We in this parliament from time to time vote large sums of money in connection with relief in western Canada. I do not believe

[Mr. Graydon.]

that many of us would care to offer a word of opposition to this or of criticism to other parts of Canada, or would refuse to assist those parts which are in distress; for I am confident that the money is, in most instances, sorely needed. But I would point out to the minister and the government that emergent circumstances exist in other sections than western Canada. In some of the municipalities of which I have personal knowledge, the relief cost has become so great that actually the home and farm owner cannot bear the burden very much longer. It is no longer possible for men to sell real estate, at any rate in some sections of the province from which I come, especially in some of the urban or semi-urban municipalities, because no one wants to be burdened with the land and to pay the high taxes. Great sections of these semi-urban municipalities find themselves with plenty of land on their hands as a result of tax sales. In the township of Toronto in my district there were 1,200 people on relief in the month of March of this year. The taxpayers there are shouldering a burden which is now practically unbearable. I am told that during this spring the ordinary road work, which hitherto has been available in consequence of the provincial government's usual policy, is not likely to be had to the same extent as last spring. That increases the intensity of the problem itself. It has been suggested in some quarters—at any rate it is the information I have received—that many of the employable people on relief may have to be cut off or the mill rate of the municipality of Toronto township will have to be increased.

The minister, fair-minded as he is in regard to these matters, will see that either of these alternatives must be avoided if at all possible. There is a growing feeling throughout Canada, especially in many municipalities which are subject to these conditions, that the dominion government is not bearing its proper proportion of the relief burden. Not only is that feeling prevalent in the municipalities and generally throughout the dominion, but the premier of Ontario has also said that he holds the same view, and that almost makes it unanimous as far as I can see.

Sharing the views of the working men of my riding and of the dominion at large, I cannot refrain from expressing their keen regret that no provision has been made this session for a scheme of unemployment insurance or for some national minimum wage legislation. I have been hoping against hope that some time during this parliament some-