

Proposed Committee on Unemployment

serious. We have heard some rather remarkable statements on the floor of this house in regard to the situation. I was amazed to hear the hon. member for Temiscouata (Mr. Pouliot) condemning the leaders of the trade union movement and placing on their shoulders the responsibility for the present situation in Canada.

We have read in the newspapers and heard on the floor of this house statements by the Acting Prime Minister and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg) to the effect that some employees are pricing themselves out of the market, and that they had better start looking elsewhere for jobs. From the cabinet benches we have heard statements to the effect that the unemployment problem is only seasonal. Mr. Speaker, the unemployment problem is not "only seasonal". I am not going to repeat the statements already made in this debate which conclusively throw back into the teeth of the cabinet ministers the statements they have made and prove that it is not seasonal. The industries they named are not seasonal industries. There is therefore something more to the problem than the seasonal factor with respect to unemployment.

The government express the pious hope that things may pick up in the spring. Mr. Speaker, a pious hope that things may pick up in the spring does not feed the stomachs of those who are unemployed today; not at all. Moreover, I do not think the government themselves really believe that statement. If so, they are more naive than I ever thought any of them were, especially a hard-headed engineer and businessman like the one who is Acting Prime Minister at the present time.

Mr. Speaker, it is no answer to say that the trade unions are to blame and that they, because of their wages and wage demands, are pricing themselves out of the market. It is no answer for the employers to say that taxes and the trade unions are pricing them out of the market. It is no answer to the unemployment situation when the government, for reasons known only to themselves, refuse to face the facts; and, Mr. Speaker, in the speeches they have made so far yesterday and today, the government are completely refusing to face the facts.

In British Columbia, within the last twelve months, the British Columbia Electric Railway Company had occasion to call for tenders for a major high-tension power line and for the supplying of the towers. Canadian companies and companies throughout the world put in bids on the supplying of these towers. The lowest Canadian tender was in the neighbourhood of \$1,600,000. The

contract went to Italy at a price well below \$1 million. No one can say that it is the cost of wages that did that, because if the Canadian workers had given their services entirely free of charge no Canadian company could have touched that Italian tender.

That is not the only example that can be given. It is a situation that is increasing in frequency. Some three weeks ago I had the opportunity of speaking for about an hour with the president of a big manufacturing concern in Ontario. His firm employs over 12,000 workers. The president of this firm told me that recently he bid on a Canadian contract and that the firm had lost it. It went to a company in England. I understand the need for trade. But, Mr. Speaker, the president of this firm which employs over 12,000 workers told me this about that contract. He said, "If our firm had given completely free the use of our factory and machinery, the costs of administration and the raw material required, we could not have matched the price of the English firm, who are up against a 20 per cent tariff when they come into Canada on that contract". He said, "We could not have matched it". That job meant approximately 300,000 man-hours of work. If they threw in the material, the machinery and the administration they still could not touch the price quoted by the English firm.

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): Why not? What does the rest of the expense consist of?

Mr. Winch: That is the very question I am asking. Why not?

Mr. Howe (Port Arthur): What other expenses were there?

Mr. Winch: I mentioned the previous experience in British Columbia. Even if they had thrown in their wages free they could not have touched the price of the Italian firm. That is the reason I am saying to the Acting Prime Minister that it is not just a matter of charging the trade unions with the responsibility because of their wages and their standards of living. It is a matter that cannot be decided by charging any single aspect of our economy, the worker, the employer or the government. It is a matter that is mighty serious. It comes into our own individual lives, our own provinces, our own industries; and it is tied up with what is happening internationally.

What is happening internationally? Are the governments outside of Canada now at a point where, in an endeavour to get Canadian dollars, they are doing something with which we cannot compete? They must be doing something to be able to bid on tenders