

Employment Commission

not saying this critically; I am not blaming them, there is no blame attached. But I do say that there is no use ramming our heads against a stone wall and doing so blindly. You will not find within the ambit of increased external trade solution of your internal unemployment problem; you cannot find it there. It is for that reason that I am a bit perturbed about the general policy of this bill, and it discloses itself in these clauses that we are at present considering: it discloses itself in the financial measures provided for; it discloses itself in the preamble and in the language both of the Prime Minister and of the Minister of Labour. While I do not intend and in fact have never intended to oppose the bill at all—I wish the minister well with it—I think we should only be deluded, this would be a sorry house a year from now, if we leaned upon this bill as a solution.

Again, I suggest to the Prime Minister that it would be far better if in this measure or in its companion measure, which does not contain any such provision, we set forth clearly in the first place a certain program of nation wide leadership in housing. Scarcely a day passes that I do not talk with fairly eminent authorities on that subject, and yet there is no leadership anywhere in the country. Take Toronto. Two years or more ago under the leadership of the lieutenant governor of the province an investigation was made and certain findings were reported with regard to housing. But nothing has been done—or little; put it that way. In Montreal a very able body of business men and public spirited citizens made a complete survey of the situation there—that was over two years ago—and a report was made. But nothing practical has been done. Right in Ottawa all you have to do is to walk down Sparks street and Bank street, particularly Bank street, and you will see buildings standing because there is a building on each side that will not let them fall down. There are a dozen of them within a few blocks right on the main business thoroughfare of this city. Then there is no effort being made in the country. The housing bill of last session had some merit, but what has become of it? A return was brought down the other day showing that some \$800,000 had been put out since that bill was brought into operation. Eight hundred thousand dollars, when we know that this country is behind in its housing to the extent of hundreds of millions of dollars! I am not talking about the government, but Canada could spend forthwith several hundred million dollars and not catch up to its normal housing requirements, to say nothing about

[Mr. Stevens.]

slum clearance or up to date housing in the modern sense. If we embarked on a modernization of Canadian city life in the way of housing it would take us ten years to catch up, and I think we could absorb most of the unemployed. Yet there is no leadership anywhere on this subject—none. Nothing is being done.

Read what is happening elsewhere. In London the county council undertook a few years ago a scheme of housing. They dealt with several of the worst slums, but I have one particularly in mind: they tore it down and rebuilt it and opened up new streets and new thoroughfares, and the whole thing is paying a handsome return to-day on the cost of the project. You can go to a score of great cities and many smaller ones in Great Britain and there see what has been done. We know the record of Sweden. We know the records of many of the European countries. I saw the other day what has been done in Russia, although I am not saying that we should pattern ourselves after Russia. Look where you will: go to South America, to Uruguay, to Peru, to Ecuador, look at the photographs of the handsome cities that have been built there in recent years, and then turn to a bird's eye view of Toronto or Montreal or Vancouver or Winnipeg or Ottawa, with its unsightly buildings, its old-fashioned poles with their wiring stretched hither and thither all over the place. And yet we say there is nothing we can do for the unemployed of Canada.

I was extremely sorry when I read the preamble of this bill and heard it referred to as a temporary measure, as something that we hope we will get rid of very quickly. I hope the Minister of Labour will not think I am unduly critical, because I greatly admire the spirit in which he has taken hold of his department. But in the first speech he delivered, which I think was in November, he referred to this exact point, his expectation that the increase of external trade would rapidly solve this problem, so that it would be removed from us. I say to him and to the government that you cannot overcome unemployment in Canada or anywhere else through the influence at the present day of external trade conditions. For instance, what effect is external trade going to have upon some hundred and fifty thousand structural workers—carpenters, masons, plumbers, painters—who are out of employment? I suppose if the government were successful in this one year in increasing the export of grain to such an extent as to reduce the carry-over from 200 million to 125 million bushels, they would consider they had achieved something wonder-