

Unemployment

I believe the government of Canada would be well advised to proceed with this project on its own and build it this year as far as Winnipeg. Certainly I can hardly believe that the Minister of Trade and Commerce of Canada would have to make an appeal by telephone to the president of a privately-owned company in the United States, almost begging on bended knee that we may be able to use some of our own natural resources in western Canada by transmitting them farther east. Things have come to a pretty pass if we cannot do anything to alleviate our unemployment situation because the president of a United States company denies us the use of a resource which rightfully belongs to the people of Canada. Whatever protests this government has been making to the United States government with respect to other matters, I think this is one matter in respect of which a protest would be in order.

That is one of the major projects, but under the general idea of public investment there are many other things that could be done. We have suggested in the past, and I should like to place it on record again, that we believe this government should participate in the construction of a highway system from coast to coast. At the present time this matter is considered to be the responsibility of the provincial governments. The federal government has participated to the extent of assisting in the building of the trans-Canada highway, but at the rate at which highway traffic is increasing in Canada, not only in volume or the number of units but in the weight of the vehicles are using our highways, it can be easily seen that many of the existing highways are a wasting asset and are not going to last very long. It is certainly a legitimate project which would be for the general welfare of Canada, and it is one which would provide employment and bring about a general increase in activity from coast to coast.

Then we have suggested a low rental housing scheme, not only to provide extra housing units but also in order to alleviate the unemployment situation. There was also the question of level grade crossings, about which some discussion has taken place. A small amount is now available to municipalities that wish to participate in the construction of systems which would eliminate the level grade crossings; but certainly that figure of \$5 million for a country like Canada, for a project of that nature, is a drop in the bucket. Here again is something which could be usefully done which would facilitate the convenience of traffic and contribute to the

safety of vehicles and of life, and it is something the federal government could use to boost employment.

I also believe the government could enter into an over-all national conservation plan which could include such things as irrigation, reclamation, reforestation and development of water power. All these things would be in a sense self-liquidating, in the sense that they would be bringing greater value to the nation, creating greater economic activity and development of our resources, and at the same time providing much-needed employment.

I would suggest also that the government proceed with the construction of storage facilities for farm products. It is true that owing to last year's light crop in the west the congestion in our elevator system has not been as great an issue in recent months as it was a year ago. But we are all hopeful, we are all optimistic in the west. We hope for a huge crop in 1955. If we do get a large crop, by next fall we shall be in exactly the same place we were a year ago. All the elevators will be filled; all the annexes will be filled; the terminal elevators will be filled, and the farmers will be left with grain lying in the field which they will not be able to move. Why not use a little foresight and start constructing storage facilities for this grain, as well as facilities for other farm products of a non-perishable nature which could be stored and used in a period of short supply, when the world demand for those products might be better than it is today?

All these things would add to the gross national product, would add to the value of our assets in Canada, and at the same time would provide useful and sensible employment. Those are some of the immediate things we believe could be done.

This afternoon I should like to devote a little time to the problem of unemployment from a national rather than a regional point of view. I feel it is time we devoted a little attention not only to the solving of the unemployment problem when it is upon us, but also to making long-range plans for preventing its recurrence. Evidently unemployment is not a new situation in Canada. The hon. member who preceded me has already placed figures on the record which show that the unemployment situation has been with us since 1930, and the only time it was temporarily solved was during the war and the years immediately following. According to the economic philosophy of this government, that was an abnormal situation.

Since it is a problem which has been recurring and which shows no tendency to solve itself, there must be a reason for it. At the