

Employment Commission

for registration, the percentage of those registering would be tremendously large because they would feel that by being registered they would be in a better position to secure employment.

I would also suggest cooperation with provincial employment service agencies, which might allow their cards to stand, and from those cards statistics could be compiled for the federal Department of Labour. Between them a fine registration could be secured. There are more pressing matters but I believe that this is one that the minister should keep in mind, because the inadequacy of the data available on this question is lamentable.

I would also ask the minister to keep in mind this question in classifying the unemployed. We hear a great deal about racketeering by the unemployed, but we hear very little about the racketeering that is done by large concerns which hire the unemployed to go out as salesmen, and pay them so little that the men are sometimes compelled to receive relief. That is not at all uncommon. It goes on right in the city of Ottawa and throughout Canada. Firms could be named, but that would be no advantage because the thing is being done on such a widespread scale. Door to door salesmen are engaged amongst the unemployed and are paid so little that they are compelled to receive relief, which means nothing more or less than that the federal government is subsidizing certain large firms.

Then as regards unemployability, there ought to be some uniform standard. I can see that for the next year at least it will be necessary, as the minister said, to leave it to the municipalities to decide whether or not a person is unemployable. If we are going to recognize as unemployable those who are mentally and physically unfitted to earn their own living, that is excellent; but if we are going to allow people to be classed as unemployable simply because they have been unemployed for a number of years, if we allow them to become chronically unemployed, if we fail to recognize that they are simply living at a subnormal level of society and should not be allowed permanently to assume that role, we are in real danger of developing a class of chronically unemployable who are handicapped merely socially and not physically or mentally.

Mr. ROGERS: I shall be glad to keep the suggestions of the hon. member in mind.

Paragraph (a) agreed to.

On paragraph (b)—Conditions to be complied with.

[Mr. Douglas.]

Mr. MacNEIL: I notice that the commission has power to direct the attention of the minister to the conditions to be complied with by the provinces in obtaining grants for relief purposes from the government of Canada. I would like to hear the minister's opinion as to the possibility of rectifying certain injustices that have borne rather heavily on the unemployed on relief. It has been clearly shown during the course of this debate that a certain delay will be inevitable before any major project can be brought into effect by the employment commission, and in the meantime a vast number of people must remain on relief. I would bring to the attention of the minister the necessity in certain districts at least of insisting that the municipal and provincial authorities maintain at least a safe minimum standard of living. As we travel throughout the country we find an absolute lack of uniformity in the payment of relief allowances, and in some districts advantage has been taken of the situation to reduce the payment of relief to a dangerously low level, with a resulting reduction in the standard of living of a large number of families to a point that is perilously low. The people have no opportunity of protesting, and I feel that at this time something should be done, until some major project can be started by the commission, to see that a safe minimum standard is insisted on by the federal government if grants are to be made to provincial and municipal authorities. Evidence was given in a special committee of the house this morning to the effect that a family of five in certain rural districts receives only something like \$2.67 a week. In my own constituency, in the unorganized territory, I have been astounded to learn of some instances of unbelievably low payments of relief to fairly large families. A large district is placed under the charge of a provincial government administrator, who has no opportunity, in view of the size of the district, of ascertaining details of the circumstances of individual families living in remote sections, except perhaps through an annual call on the part of the administrator. I can assure the minister that great distress results from this condition. A safe minimum living standard should be established for those now on relief, until such time as the commission may launch a major project designed to deal more effectively with present conditions.

There is another point I wish to bring to the attention of the minister, and it is with respect to the exploitation of the unemployed on relief. There is a particular form of exploitation that occurs under the