

Proposed Committee on Unemployment

wanted to protect their in-laws, their friends and relatives, at the expense of other men who had seniority rights over them. That has been my experience with the union. I had to fight with them. The trouble is, sir, that these same people never represent the mentality of the men in the union. Most of the time the men are willing to work if they are allowed to go back to their jobs, but they cannot. There is a protest from the union leaders. They encourage them to continue their strike and they promise them the moon. We cannot go on like that. The high cost of living has been created by the exacting requests of the labour unions and they are not sensible and it is impossible to discuss the matter with them. My suggestion is that we should take every opportunity to appeal to the common sense of the men by speaking over the heads of the leaders of their union.

I am not shocked at all to hear any hon. member of parliament speaking about unemployment. Other hon. members have problems in their constituencies, as I have in mine, and I sympathize with those who are unemployed. On the other hand, if the union leaders from the general chairman down were more sensible we would have less unemployment in this country.

If we figure out the total amount of unemployment in this country, we must consider that many men were engaged in lumbering operations who did not receive unemployment insurance benefits before, and it is due to representation made by the hon. members of the constituencies in which there are forestry operations, from Newfoundland, north of the St. Lawrence, eastern Quebec, northern Ontario, and northern Quebec, that these men received unemployment insurance benefits.

These hon. members made representation to the former minister of labour—the present Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg) was at the Department of Veterans Affairs at that time—in order to have unemployment insurance benefits for these men engaged in lumbering operations. At that time there was a crisis in the sale of lumber and we succeeded with the help of the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour at that time, now Mr. Justice Cote, in securing unemployment benefits for the men who had paid no dues to the commission, contrary to what is required by the law. There was an exception made for the first year, but that large body of men are now on the list of unemployed. They are securing unemployment benefits which they did not receive before. The law was changed in order to give them an opportunity similar to that accorded

to other workers and this was done through the efforts of hon. members in the constituencies in which there are forests. They did that to help the men. That assistance was suggested by my parliamentary colleagues but it was never suggested by any union. It was done by members of parliament and was implemented by the then minister of labour in the Liberal government at that time. That was very important.

Today, if there are 500,000 unemployed, there may be a large number of men who were engaged in lumbering operations and whose names are recorded amongst those of the unemployed, because lumber operations were shorter last fall than was usual. On account of what? On account of weather conditions. We had no snow until the middle of December in our part of the country and lumbering operations were therefore much less important than they are normally.

On the other hand, we must remember the government has done everything it possibly can to give assistance to the unemployed by giving all the work it was possible to do by encouraging private and public corporations to give them that work, and also by coming to their assistance with family allowances and pensions such as are paid to the older people. Not only that, there are the invalids who are dependent on the unemployed. This year it was with joy that I heard the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) say that the government was to come to their rescue by giving them a pension.

Mr. Martin: The hon. member had been urging that for some time.

Mr. Pouliot: I had been urging that but I was not the only one. I remember that there were motions in the names of many members for many years; there was the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Picard), the hon. member for Compton-Frontenac (Mr. Blanchette), the hon. member for Terrebonne (Mr. Bertrand) and I do not know how many others.

Mr. Martin: The hon. member for Fort William (Mr. McIvor).

Mr. Pouliot: Yes; our dean, the hon. member for Fort William. We had made representations to the government in order to obtain that result which is most satisfactory. I was delighted to hear that the provinces had agreed to the scheme.

Mr. Martin: No. They have agreed in principle.

Mr. Pouliot: I thank the minister. They have agreed in principle. But there were conferences between federal and provincial representatives here in Ottawa in order to