

Mr. HEAPS: The Minister of Justice says it is a charge because I am quoting from a newspaper. In other words any hon. member of this house who quotes what another hon. member is reported to have said is guilty of making a charge.

Mr. LAPOINTE (Quebec East): Make it unfair comment.

Mr. HEAPS: Then we will say it is comment, according to my right hon. friend; even say it is unfair comment. It cannot be said that it is a charge. All I am trying to find out is whether this is government policy. Now I am told that the policy of the government is not what is purported to have been said by the Secretary of State, although the Secretary of State claimed to be speaking on behalf of the government at that meeting.

I am interested in the unemployment situation, and because of that I felt constrained to refer to this item appearing in a newspaper purporting to contain the remarks of a minister speaking for the crown. We have had an unemployment situation in this country since away back in 1930, and only a few days ago we heard the Minister of Labour talk about what the government have done for unemployment in this country. He was enthusiastic with regard to the achievements of the government in coping with the situation, and that was what I wanted to deal with principally this afternoon if time had permitted.

I find that in November, 1935, when the government came into power, we had 423,000 persons who were unemployed—that is according to the bureau of statistics. In November, 1938, exactly three years later, the number of unemployed according to the same authority was 398,000, or a drop of about 25,000 in that period of time.

Mr. ROGERS: I suppose the hon. gentleman would acknowledge that in each of those three years the actual number of wage earners in this country would have been increased by the entry into the wage earning group of those who were not within that group previously?

Mr. HEAPS: That is perfectly correct, but does the Minister of Labour realize how many people returned to the old country during that period of time?

Mr. ROGERS: Does my hon. friend know?

Mr. HEAPS: No. Would the minister expect me to know when the government does not know?

Mr. ROGERS: Does my hon. friend seriously suggest that the number would be in the thousands?

Mr. HEAPS: Yes; some people put it at many, many thousands, yet there has been a drop of only 25,000 in that period of time in spite of all the efforts of the government. Then may I go a step further on that very point. Supposing my hon. friend the Minister of Labour, who held a very responsible and honoured position at Queen's university and who is a keen student of economics, had a group of students with whom he was discussing the unemployment situation, altogether apart from political considerations. What would he say about the period from 1930 to 1938? Undoubtedly he would tell his students that starting in 1930 there was a downward curve of industry in this country which reached its bottom in 1933; and that from 1933 there was a rise in employment, an increase in trade activities, which reached its peak in 1937. I know that is what he would tell his students; that is what any economist would say. What does that mean? It means that this period cut right across governments, whether they were Liberal or Conservative.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order. I am sorry, but the hon. member has exhausted his time.

Some hon. MEMBERS: Go on.

Mr. HEAPS: I do not wish to take up more than my time, because I know there are many other hon. members who are anxious to speak. We will have other opportunities of dealing with this question.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the hon. member has the unanimous consent of the house—

Some hon. MEMBERS: Yes.

Mr. HEAPS: I will conclude, Mr. Speaker. I know other opportunities will be afforded before very long to discuss this question of unemployment, as I have discussed it in previous years. But this parliament cannot ignore this very important fact, that of all the questions that confront us the most important are these questions of unemployment and the plight of our youth. I am pleased that the government have taken steps to deal with the youth problem; but as the minister stated in reply to the leader of the opposition, even if a minister were appointed in charge of youth that would not of necessity provide employment. But the other steps the government have taken as yet have not been able to provide more employment, and in my opinion the only way to deal with the problem is by so readjusting our economic conditions