

*Proposed Committee on Unemployment*

here in Ottawa which was called because the federal government of that day desired to rent from the provinces certain taxation fields, in return for which they would be given an annual subsidy on a certain basis. Although that conference was called for the nominal purpose of reaching a dominion-provincial agreement on the rental of provincial taxational rights, as far as the provinces of Canada were concerned they met the government in August, 1945, on the government's own proposals to the effect that they had plans for full employment and high standards of living in the Dominion of Canada.

I want to refer to the report of the plenary conference discussions held between August 6 and 10, 1945, in order to demonstrate to hon. members and to you, Mr. Speaker, that the provinces did come here with the thought that the government in 1945 had a plan for full employment, and that the government itself admitted that that was the primary purpose of the conference, not taxation agreements. In the report of the plenary conference discussions we find on page 30 a statement by Hon. John Hart, the premier of British Columbia. He made the point very clear, and I would like to quote a passage from his remarks:

We believe that all Canadians are looking to this conference with expectancy. Events, since the frustrating days of the last depression, have greatly influenced opinions previously held on the proper role of government in the national economy. The success which has attended the management of Canada's war economy has, we believe, persuaded thoughtful citizens everywhere that much can be done in times of peace to control the effects of a disturbed business cycle; to banish the fear of unemployment and social insecurity; to maintain a high level of employment and income; and to achieve an ever-rising standard of living.

That was presented at the first plenary session by the Liberal premier of British Columbia, and I agree with his opening remarks. That was not only the viewpoint of the premier of British Columbia, but also of the premiers of the other provinces. The questions before that conference were those concerning plans for stabilization of full employment and a high standard of living, and these plans were uppermost in the minds of the federal government itself. On page 83 of the same report the Minister of Trade and Commerce had this to say:

The dominion further proposes to pay a specific grant of 20 per cent of the cost of provincial and municipal public investment projects if

(a) they have been accepted and registered by the dominion authority as fully planned projects prior to the time of execution;

(b) they are executed in a period designated by the dominion authority.

[Mr. Winch.]

Further on he said:

In the timing of projects the dominion would concern itself only with employment considerations . . .

I would like to give one more quotation from this report, from a statement made by the then minister of labour, the late Mr. Humphrey Mitchell. He said this, as reported at page 102 of the same report:

The dominion government in its statement on employment and income announced that the maintenance of a high level of employment and income was "a primary object of policy". The people of Canada and the provincial and municipal governments are thus assured of an active dominion policy to avoid and combat unemployment.

May I just repeat that last sentence from this statement at the plenary session of the conference between the federal government and the provinces of Canada in regard to the purpose of the conference, and what the federal government would do. I quote again:

The people of Canada and the provincial and municipal governments are thus assured of an active dominion policy to avoid and combat unemployment.

These words were uttered, Mr. Speaker, between the 6th and 10th of August, 1945. Today we have 524,000 recognized unemployed in the Dominion of Canada. The implied policies of the federal government have never been put into effect. Let me remind hon. members—and I know what I am talking about because I was a member of the provincial legislature at that time—that when the Liberal premier came back and introduced a bill on the taxation rental agreement his speech indicated, although it was not in the contract before the legislature, that these policies enunciated by the then prime minister, the late Mr. Mackenzie King, the present Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent), the Acting Prime Minister (Mr. Howe) and the late Mr. Humphrey Mitchell, on behalf of the federal government, would be implemented.

Today, sir, the federal government has not yet put forward any plan or assumed any responsibility for the care of the employable unemployed, outside of the regulations on unemployment insurance. If I am incorrect I hope I shall be corrected, but I have yet to hear of the government having made an attempt to carry through its own proposals in co-operation with the provincial governments for laying out plans which could be used in times of unemployment, and on a timing established by the federal government, upon which they would pay 20 per cent of the capital cost.

Due to the failure of the government since 1945, this parliament now finds itself unprepared to deal with a serious situation. It is