

The Address—Mr. Diefenbaker

Mr. Diefenbaker: It continued on and off until 1949, when in March it was 4 per cent; March 4, 1950, 6.1 per cent. Then, we go through a period of years and you find this, again in February and March of 1954, it was 6 per cent and 6.1 per cent; in January, February, March and April of 1955, it was 6.7 per cent; 7 per cent; 7.4 per cent and 6 per cent; in January, February, March and April of 1956, it ranged between 5.2 per cent; 5.5 per cent; 5.3 per cent and 4.6 per cent; again, in January, February, March and April of 1957, it was 5.3 per cent; 5.6 per cent; 5.9 per cent and 5.3 per cent.

I realize this fact, that we have in Canada a winter problem, and in order to meet that winter problem a municipal plan was launched under the auspices of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Starr), with which he will deal in particular. Let me point out that in the latest figures for October and November the percentage in October was 5.1 per cent and in November 5.9 per cent.

Mr. Pearson: Give the figures for the first four months of 1958.

Mr. Diefenbaker: The figures for the first four months of the year were placed on the record several times last session, but I have no objection to doing so again. They were 8.8 per cent; 9.4 per cent; 10 per cent and 8.6 per cent. This indicates that, with the exception of that recessionary movement which is present everywhere in the free world, the percentage of unemployment, while high and definitely challenging and worrisome, is nonetheless now, I believe, giving way to the end of this recession. The president said that today in the United States with some 4 million unemployed. My hope is that we will be able to meet this by further action to be taken.

The winter works projects I have already mentioned—

Mr. Pickersgill: I wonder if the Prime Minister, before he leaves these figures, will permit a question?

Mr. Diefenbaker: Certainly.

Mr. Pickersgill: Can he give a comparison of the latest month this year with the latest month last year, the latest month in 1958 with the corresponding month in 1957?

Mr. Diefenbaker: When the minister speaks he will give the full record. I am just indicating that—

Mr. Robichaud: You are picking your own month.

Mr. Diefenbaker:—at a time when so much is being said about the situation in this country one should compare it with the

United States. The figures, when compared with United States unemployment, indicate that we in this country are making the return from the difficulties in that connection. My hon. friends may speak of inflation, and of the effects, but I believe our first responsibility is to do everything we can to meet the problem which we, I repeat, inherited from the Liberal government.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pickersgill: Will the Prime Minister permit a question? I understood the Prime Minister to say that the situation was worse in the United States than in Canada. Does he think that the United States inherited the situation from the Liberal government of Canada?

Mr. Diefenbaker: You cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Pickersgill: That is exactly the point I was making.

Mr. Diefenbaker: I am very glad my hon. friend brought that up because, as I pointed out earlier, we went into the recession first and since then have been affected by the degree of United States unemployment. I am glad the hon. member brought that up.

I am not going to deal tonight with the question of agriculture except to say that we have taken action, and that action will be set out in detail by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Harkness) when he speaks. When I spoke in this house on August 30, 1958 I set forth a long term policy on behalf of agriculture. I pointed out the action we intended to take. Today we are taking that action and intend to introduce legislation at the present session to bring about something which, since the earliest days in Saskatchewan and western Canada has been requested, namely a system of crop insurance. In addition to that, we intended to meet a problem which, during the years, has been one upon which agriculture has demanded action, namely expanding credit.

Mention was made by the hon. gentleman of freight rates. He wrapped himself up in inconsistencies and he said, why was not something done? This is not a new problem. In 1948 the former government instructed the board of transport commissioners to proceed with an investigation into discriminatory freight rates to the end that equalization should be brought about so that those in the western provinces and maritime provinces should in no way unnecessarily be discriminated against; that is 10 years ago. They also set up a royal commission, the Turgeon commission. It met and in 1951 it