

Unemployment Insurance Act

Mr. Speaker, labour unions all over the country have been stirred more than once by the constant rise of unemployment, which is no longer seasonal or regional but has become in most instances permanent unemployment. It is permanent undoubtedly because of poor administration on the part of the government now in power. However, I am happy to note that, following numerous protests and representations, the government finally decided to bring some help to those who, at the present time, are most in need.

I wish to point out, however, that this measure is not in the nature of a permanent cure for the canker I spoke of a while ago. It is a mere poultice applied over a gaping wound, a poultice that will not heal the sore but will merely lighten the pain.

What our workers want, what they are asking and have never ceased to ask the government to do is to give them work. I know that the people I have the honour of representing have inherited if not material wealth, at least the will to work and the love for work of their forbears. They want to have the satisfaction of earning their daily bread by the sweat of their brows, as stated in the Scriptures.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the resolution now before the house will be of some help to people in need. However, I deem it my duty to say that the people of Canada and more particularly the workers of the constituency of Quebec West have not and never had the intention of begging anything from the government. What they are clamouring for is work because they want to keep up their reputation as work-loving people. In other words, what they want is sufficient work to enable them to provide for their families and meet their obligations.

Mr. Chairman, judging from what has been said in the speech from the throne, it seems that the government intends to spend more to help the unemployed and give them work.

I hope, Mr. Chairman, that the projects undertaken will not consist in repair or construction work given to contractors here and there, which can be undertaken by these contractors with the workers already on their payrolls. What we need is an extensive public works program which would provide employment for hundreds and thousands of workers. That is the only way of putting an end to the increasing wave of unemployment which is the cause of so much grief and sorrow in Canadian homes.

As far as the city of Quebec is concerned, Mr. Chairman, I have already had the opportunity on several occasions of asking the house to undertake the projects I deemed necessary to the welfare of our people. I intend to repeat my requests from time to time. For the present, I shall content myself with asking that the unemployment benefits mentioned in the motion now before the house be extended at least until May 1.

I mentioned a moment ago a group of workers known as day labourers. You undoubtedly know that in areas where winter lingers on it is not always possible to undertake any extensive work before spring. This happens very often where large numbers of workers, more particularly day labourers, cannot start working before the sunny days of spring. I therefore suggest that the proposed date, April 15, be extended to May 1, as a much greater number of people would benefit from the measure.

Another reason why we must press for work, jobs and employment for our people is that there is a constant influx of immigrants into this country. If we are now unable to give work to those who are commonly known as the native sons of Canada, why should we seek abroad other employees, when we cannot feed those who are already here. Perhaps, this government would, therefore, be well advised in taking the necessary steps to ensure that Canadians be supplied with the food and the clothing they need, and that our workers enjoy at home a certain measure of prosperity.

Mr. Chairman, those are the few comments I wanted to make on the proposed resolution. Needless to say that I am supporting the principle of the resolution and the bill, and that I intend in due course to ask the government to increase the benefits. However, I wish to repeat that we cannot cure a canker by simply applying a poultice, and the extension of unemployment insurance benefits is a mere poultice applied to the present situation.

Let us give jobs, and, I repeat it once more, the work-loving people of my constituency will see to it that this love of work is handed down to future generations.

(Text):

Mr. Knowles: Mr. Chairman, as my colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway, has already pointed out, we welcome this little bill but we cannot get very excited about it. It does seem to us