

Proposed Committee on Unemployment

out of world markets, and consequently we have unemployment. Then there is the increasing danger of competition from Europe and Asia, particularly from Germany and Japan. There again they are able to out-produce and out-sell us, and that is one of the big problems that we as Canadians must face.

I come back again to the drop in purchasing power of those engaged in agriculture, which is now being felt not only with respect to agricultural implements but in all segments of our economy. Another thing that worries agriculture is the fact that while farmers are taking a 22 per cent cut in the prices of the things they sell, very little if any of that reduction is reflected in the prices the consumer pays. In fact the last report of the dominion bureau of statistics actually indicates that the cost of living has gone up. Certainly it is fractional, but the reduction in farm prices is not indicated in the cost of living.

According to the minister there are 524,000 people seeking employment. But that does not indicate how many firms are operating on short time, two, three or four days a week, or on shortened hours of work. It does not indicate the number of people who are out of jobs but do not go to the unemployment insurance offices and report for work. They search for work themselves and try to find jobs.

I had an experience along that line a week ago Saturday when I returned home. I was waiting on the street near the station for my family to pick me up with the car. An elderly gentleman came along and I passed the time of day with him. I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I have just come from the unemployment insurance office, where I have been collecting my unemployment insurance." He said, "This is the first time in my life I have ever had to collect unemployment insurance. Never before when I was out of a job was I unable to go around and find another job. If the worst came to the worst I could always go out to the farming country and get a job, but they do not want men today. They are equipped with farm machinery, and they do not want transient help. They are not hiring anybody. Consequently I am walking the street looking for a job and collecting my unemployment insurance."

I think the Acting Prime Minister handed out rather cold comfort to the unemployed when he suggested that they go and find different jobs, in view of the fact that at the present time there are some 500,000 men who cannot find work.

Another rather disturbing angle is our trade position. We have an unfavourable trade balance after many good years. Actually what is happening is that we are employing people abroad to produce and do things that many of our Canadian people could do for themselves and do as well or better. But the goods that are produced by these people abroad are priced lower because of the lower cost of labour and the lower standards of living in these countries. Therefore we have become dependent on many foreign countries for things that we could produce ourselves.

I do not need to go over the list of such goods, but some of them are Canadian farm products that are being replaced by foreign goods. So far the government have evinced no desire whatever to change their trade, economic and fiscal policies to meet the changing conditions of the times.

The hon. member for Cape Breton South (Mr. Gillis) blamed unbridled capitalism for some of our troubles, but there are many people throughout the country who blame unbridled inflation for the difficulties in which we find ourselves. Prices have chased wages and wages have chased prices up and up into an unreal price world. As we look around this Canada of ours we see that there are thousands and thousands of things that can be done. Yet there seem to be so many dollars to do other things and so few dollars to do the things that could and should be done. So far the government has only indicated a fervent hope that things will get better. They are waiting for something to turn up.

Mr. Stewart (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps I should explain why I intend at this moment to alter the order of rotation. I should like to tell the hon. member for Winnipeg North that I was informed that it would be most convenient if the hon. member for Inverness-Richmond could be allowed to speak now. Considering that the hon. member for Fort William only spoke for a few minutes and that the hon. member for Inverness-Richmond is not going to speak for any more than 20 or 25 minutes, I think the hon. member for Winnipeg North will agree that it would be a nice gesture if he would allow the hon. member to proceed now. Then he may proceed.

Mr. A. J. MacEachen (Inverness-Richmond): Mr. Speaker, in rising to take part in this debate on unemployment I am conscious of the concern any degree of unemployment causes hon. members in the house and the people of Canada generally. I am very happy to follow my good friend from Cape Breton South in this debate because his constituents,