

Mr. RALSTON: That is about the finest exhibition of shifty work I have witnessed.

An hon. MEMBER: You should know.

Mr. RALSTON: I have given my hon. friend the facts. I have been in my own constituency, and talked with the men who gave the information to me. My contentions are on record in the department over which my hon. friend has control. However, if he is quite content with it—

An hon. MEMBER: Give us the names.

Mr. GORDON: Yes, let us have the names.

Mr. RALSTON: The minister is not interested in them, at all.

Mr. GORDON: Yes, I am quite interested.

Mr. RALSTON: I believe the Minister of Public Works wishes to make a few comments.

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): Mr. Chairman, I desire briefly to reply to some of the statements made by the hon. member for Shelburne-Yarmouth (Mr. Ralston). I wish to assure him that when starting out on this program to relieve the unemployed the government and every member of it kept in mind the primary object of having the work conducted in every case so as to provide the largest possible measure of relief to those in need. I think my hon. friend will admit we had no easy task, and that at times it is impossible to conduct work of this kind in a way which will be absolutely fair and satisfactory to all parties concerned. We agree also that sometimes for some motive or another complaints are made which are not well founded. Sometimes the motives are political, and sometimes they are motives equally unsatisfactory. I wish to assure my hon. friend that from the beginning the Department of Public Works and the officials connected with it have realized their responsibility. We started out with the fixed determination that as far as we could control the situation the work should be given to those who most needed it. I am not aware that my hon. friend sent to the department any complaints whatever with respect to work in his constituency. If he did, such complaints were immediately investigated, and if any abuses were found they were corrected—not only in his constituency, but in every other constituency from which any complaints came.

From the beginning the government has made a sincere and honest, and, in large measure, a very successful effort to meet the unemployment situation in the administration

of these works. I am going to read to my hon. friend a letter that early in the season was sent out from the Department of Public Works to all the district engineers. It is dated November 25, 1931:

Dear Sir,—

It has, in a few instances, been reported to the department that the spirit and intent of the Unemployment and Farm Relief Act, 1931, in connection with employment of labour, have not been fully lived up to. The purpose of providing funds from which works would be carried out was to give employment to the needy and this was to be so arranged that the funds available for payment of labour would be distributed as fairly as possible among those in the locality where work was being carried on who were known to be in need, and in the first instance to those who were also the support of dependents.

Employment was to be given to parties in the above category regardless of political affiliations, race or creed.

The department wishes to reiterate that employment is to be distributed as fairly as possible among the people in the locality where money is being expended by giving employment to those in need of funds to sustain their dependents and themselves, and who have not other resources to carry them over the present period.

Employment is to be offered regardless of any political or religious affiliations, or racial stock.

In order that employment may be distributed amongst the needy as fairly as possible, the authorities in the locality who are in a position to know the circumstances of heads of families, and who can be most relied on to furnish a list of parties in need, are to be consulted, and the men are to be engaged in rotation for a few days at a time.

You will be expected to see, as far as possible, that the spirit and intent of parliament in granting the funds for this purpose, and of the government in allotting the funds, are met.

Kindly let me know what your procedure is in assuring this result.

That letter on the instructions of the head of the department was sent by the chief engineer to every district engineer. We have many letters of approval and commendation as to the way in which the works have been carried on. As I have said, any complaint that came in was immediately investigated. In some cases foremen were suspended, in other cases they were dismissed, and in every instance a sincere attempt was made to rectify anything that was not in keeping with the spirit of this legislation and with the tenor of these instructions.

Mr. VENIOT: The minister will admit that his orders were not always obeyed, then.

Mr. STEWART (Leeds): In some instances they were not, and, as my hon. friend said, in his constituency where they were not obeyed the conditions were very speedily rectified.