

government is taking authority under the bill which will follow the resolution to enter into such arrangements with the different provinces of Canada as may be deemed expedient. It is desirable in my opinion that the power granted to the government should be most elastic. True it is, as has been intimated, that as a result of the conference held between the federal government and the representatives of the various provinces on April 9 last, there was more or less general agreement that unemployment relief works should not be continued on the former scale. To my mind, the nature of the relief works to be carried on is primarily a matter for the decision of the provinces. Figures prove very little, but for what they are worth I offer a few so as to lay a background for the whole matter.

The only approximate survey or registration made as to the extent of unemployment in Canada was prepared in September of 1931. The records show that on September 1, 1931, the needy unemployed in Canada numbered about 379,000; in Manitoba, my native province, there were about 41,000.

Is the condition cured? From time to time hon. members opposite seem to take a great deal of pleasure in pointing out that it is not. Some say the condition is worse than it was before. That is a consideration which to my mind does not go to the root of the question. It comes down to this: We have a condition of unemployment in Canada; whether it be in a measure greater or less it is still a matter of national importance, and it is the privilege, yea the duty of this House of Commons to endeavour to deal with it.

What has been done? I am not going to enter into details. Hon. members are familiar with the steps which have been taken. Since September, 1930, there has been a frank recognition by this government of the fact that unemployment in Canada had reached a stage where it had become a matter of great national concern. There has been a large measure of cooperation between this government and the governments of the various provinces from the session of September, 1930, until this very day, and it is the hope of all that that measure of cooperation will continue.

I shall now say a few words concerning the resolution before us. As it is already on record, I shall not take occasion again to place it on Hansard. The agreements to be entered into with the various provinces are matters for negotiation. The means by which those agreements will be worked out in the various provinces in my opinion is primarily a matter for the consideration of the particular provinces involved. Relief is essentially a local matter, we must recognize that

the municipalities, the lowest unit of government, know their problems better than any other body. The provinces, in turn, know best their particular problems. So I say that whatever agreements are entered into should be worked out in the light of the conditions prevailing in the particular provinces.

I refer to another matter to which attention has been brought in this house, namely the back to the land movement. This matter has received extensive consideration in the province of Manitoba. There has been an intimation that the settlement or reestablishment of unemployed men upon plots of land will be restricted to crown lands. I realize that is not a declared governmental policy, and that no definite agreements have yet been made. I think however the present is the opportune time to draw to the attention of the minister this fact: I realize the evil that is apprehended and which it is the desire of everybody to forestall, namely that in connection with any movement on the part of governments to acquire lands for the unemployed the avidity of certain members of the real estate fraternity will be such that there will be a tendency to exploit governmental purchasers. That was the experience in connection with the movement to settle ex-service men upon the lands after the war. The suggestion is that in order to forestall such an eventuality only crown lands be made available. To my mind such action would be like amputating a leg to cure a corn.

Some of the most suitable lands are not crown lands. Men cannot be taken out with no equipment and only a few hundred dollars and placed on bush lands. Behind it all there must be the probability that with the measure of support or assistance they may get they will stand a reasonable chance of taking their living from the soil. I suggest there should be chosen farms already under cultivation or partial cultivation, and with buildings thereon. In Manitoba, and I have no doubt in other parts of Canada, there are improved lands in various municipalities which for one reason or another have come back to those municipalities. Lands have come back under various farm loan boards; lands are a drug in the hands of mortgage companies. I suggest therefore that the back to the land movement, a possible relief measure, be not cabined and confined by restriction to crown lands, but that the difficulty be met by providing that in each province—and I speak particularly for my province of Manitoba—there shall be a board of public spirited men to work in cooperation with provincial and federal governments who will have charge of the matter. It is not my privilege to suggest names, but in the city