

*The Budget—Mr. Martin*

in assuming that the unemployment insurance commission has not been selling its securities in recent days.

These are important questions, questions which the Minister of Finance cannot dodge and must not be allowed to dodge during the course of this very day if he is to be fair to the workers of our country, who are greatly concerned about the opportunity that will be available to them after May or after June next if they are to take advantage of contractual rights which they possess for maintenance assistance under the terms of the Unemployment Insurance Act.

The whole story of this fund during the period this government has been in office reflects the inept way in which the government has conducted its affairs. We know that in December, 1956 the fund amounted to \$921 million. We know also that in May, 1960 it stood at \$296 million. Here is what the advisory committee had to say in the report clandestinely laid on the table just before Christmas without the house knowing anything about it:

It is not safe to estimate that the fund will have a balance greater than \$140 million to \$150 million at the end of March 1961, and should unemployment be higher than last winter the fund may well be lower than the figures mentioned.

The report further states, and I ask the Minister of Finance to bear these words in mind:

By the end of May 1961 the fund will possibly be as low as \$85 million and certainly at a most unsafe level.

This government has no apprehension about this matter at all. I say that by the end of June, unless the government acts, there will be nothing whatever left in the fund. That is obvious when you consider that the fund stood at over \$900 million in 1956 and that it now faces the possibility, according to the report, of being practically depleted at the end of May. Surely one is justified in saying that this government shows a reckless regard for the implicit trust laid upon it to protect the integrity of this fund and the workers of Canada.

The Prime Minister and his colleagues brag about the magnitude of the drain on the fund. For instance, when speaking over television on September 21, 1960 the Prime Minister said:

—we have taken action to implement that statement by providing new jobs and by making possible the largest increase in social justice payments to individuals, including unemployment benefits, in any comparable period in the history of this nation.

I ask the Prime Minister what these unemployment insurance payments have to do with his new concept of social justice and the present government of Canada. I repeat

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that the money paid out of the fund is not money that belongs to the government of Canada. It is money it holds in trust for two groups, who are the main contributors. To take credit for this as a new demonstration of its interest in social justice reveals the character of this government and its real concern for the plight of the unemployed.

The Prime Minister in that statement gives us an opportunity to evaluate the tremendous drain on the fund. It is a significant fact that from the time this fund was first created until the former government went out of office, in a period extending over 17 years and ending March 31, 1957, benefit payments under unemployment insurance amounted to \$1,458,288,979.24. In three years and eight months, since March 31, 1957 up until the present time, the period during which this government has been in office, benefit payments totalled \$1,519,224,628.05, under \$100 million more in three years than was paid out in the previous 17-year period. Nevertheless the Prime Minister had the audacity to say on television the other day that the present level of unemployment is not as great as it was during periods of Liberal government. This is an important matter. I call on the Minister of Finance to deal with this matter today if he speaks, or if he does not I ask him to delegate that matter to someone else. I ask him to bring in the amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act as quickly as possible.

The minister has a responsibility in this matter along with the Minister of Labour. He cannot leave that responsibility to the Minister of Labour alone because it will be his responsibility to replenish the fund, to recommend the policy that will be adopted; and if this matter is not brought before the house at the earliest possible moment, if we wait until May, the government will be denying the workers of Canada and the employer groups a right that is theirs.

I warn the minister now that if he hopes to replenish this fund by the method he employed a year ago he will incur the wrath of the Canadian people and will receive an indictment all over this country. If he proposes to replenish the fund by increasing the contributions of the employers and workers as he did in 1959 he will be placing himself in jeopardy as far as the Canadian people are concerned.

The minister is now in that very insecure position. We have a right to request that this matter be brought before parliament at the earliest opportunity. The Minister of Finance should have seen fit to do so in December. The fact that he did not do so