

Unemployment Continuance Act

Speaker do now leave the chair for the house to resolve itself into committee of the whole on the following proposed resolution:

Resolved, that it is expedient to introduce a bill to amend chapter 58 of the statutes of Canada, 1931, striking out the word "March" in section 8, and substituting the word "May" therefor.

Mr. THOMAS McMILLAN (South Huron): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that I am a layman the house will be surprised at my venturing into the realm of legalities. I wonder at the attitude adopted by the Prime Minister (Mr. Bennett). I always looked upon him as being a wizard among the great lights of the legal world. However, since taking my seat in this house I have often thought we have had to listen to more trash in the way of legal technicalities than I have heard during all my previous life. The resolution reads:

Resolved, that it is expedient to introduce a bill to amend chapter 58 of the statutes of Canada, 1931, striking out the word "March" in section 8, and substituting the word "May" therefor.

Section 8 of the act reads:

This act shall expire on the 1st day of March, 1932.

The first point I wish to make is, I am not dealing with legal technicalities, but sojourning in the field of common sense. Here we are discussing on March 15, the question of amending this act. One grain of common sense should tell us that this act is just as dead and defunct as is Mother Shipton, with whom my right hon. friend is so pleased to converse, and who, I am sure, must have expired one hundred years ago. Why should we discuss an act of this kind? Is it not reasonable to request the Prime Minister (Mr. Bennett) to withdraw this legislation in order that we may discuss something into which we can instil life? The resolution upon which this act was based reads:

That it is expedient to bring in a measure to confer certain powers upon the governor in council in respect to unemployment and farm relief; and for the maintenance of peace, order and good government in all parts of Canada; and to authorize the governor in council to expend for the said purposes out of the consolidated revenue fund such sums as may from time to time be necessary.

What is the meaning of that resolution upon which the act was based? Does it not mean that the government asked for authority to be allowed to ride roughshod over the constitutional rights of parliament and to do anything which the most abandoned citizen of this country might feel inclined to do? I do not say that the government will do that, but

[Mr. MacLaren.]

the power is there. I will discuss this phase of the matter later on, but I ask the house to realize that this is March 15, fifteen days after the act expired. I ask the right hon. gentleman to bear in mind the warning given by Julius Caesar—Beware the ides of March.

This legislation is but the logical sequence of the record of this government since it obtained office on August 8, 1930. During the election campaign the Prime Minister promised that he would end unemployment by federal means. He referred to the members of the King cabinet as "this group of mercenaries holding office by sham and subterfuge. Look upon them as treacherous to you; self-confessed, deserving of your passionate condemnation;" hurl them from place and power and select the great I Am who will lead you into the promised land and do that which ought to be done for the welfare of this country. That was the promise he made during the elections. That promise was implemented when in September, 1930, he called the special session of parliament presumably for the purpose of ending unemployment by federal means. In about as little time as it takes to tell, he scrapped the whole theory of ending unemployment by federal means, sought a vote of \$20,000,000 for the purpose and saddled over three-quarters of the cost upon the provinces and municipalities of this dominion. What else did he do? His first expression on the floor of parliament as Prime Minister of Canada was "that in so far as possible the requirements of the ten millions of Canadian people must be produced at home," thereby showing at once that he and his government did not wish to encourage the importation of any line of goods which could be produced in this country, thus drying up the stream of trade and paralyzing our greatest industry, that of agriculture.

His next act in amplification of this course was to jack up the Canadian tariff against the importation of British goods almost to the prohibitive point, practically wiping out the British preference before he and his colleagues ever went to the Imperial conference, thereby ejecting British goods at the toe of the boot from Canadian markets which they had enjoyed for a lifetime.

His third act was to pass some of the most unreasonable customs and tariff legislation ever forced through the parliament of any country, and he did this under the threat that until all this legislation to which I have referred, was passed, he would refuse to leave Ottawa to go to the Imperial conference. It is well known that every member of the house wished the Prime Minister to perform his