

Unemployment Continuance Act

would hope, however, if there is any discussion on the matter, that it might be somewhat more relevant to the bill than the discussion to which we have listened for the past forty minutes. I do not say this in an offensive manner, but I do say that I hope when the matter is dealt with it will be considered with more promptitude, a manner which would be in striking contrast to that which has characterized the measure now before the house.

If my friends, those concerned from both east and west, will attend the agriculture committee at its meeting in the morning, will see that representations are made, a resolution passed and a recommendation made that it be brought before this chamber, all facilities of this government will be available for the purpose of seeing that consideration is given to it.

Mr. BEAUBIEN: I wish to thank the Prime Minister for his kind words. It is a pleasure to see him in such good humour, and I appreciate it.

Mr. BENNETT: I am always in good humour.

Mr. LAPOINTE: You do not show it all the time.

Mr. BENNETT: It is other hon. members who become somewhat heated.

Mr. BEAUBIEN: If the right hon. gentleman will stay in that good humour for the rest of the session I hope I shall have the pleasure of many more conversations with him such as I have had to-day.

Mr. BENNETT: They have been long distance conversations.

Mr. BEAUBIEN: I am glad the Prime Minister has made the statement he did make. I hope whatever recommendations the committee makes will be made definitely, whether or not we are going to amend the grading this year, because seeding is about to commence.

Mr. BENNETT: The sooner the better; that is the reason the minister asked consent the other day.

Mr. RALSTON: I wish to refer the Prime Minister and the committee to the provision in the bill which provides for the payment of undischarged obligations after the expiry of the act. May I say that with money voted under the estimates the practice has obtained, and has been approved by the Auditor General, whereby if commitments are made under any particular vote, and the vote expires because the end of the fiscal year has been reached, cheques may be issued for

[Mr. Bennett.]

a period of perhaps fifteen days after the expiry of the vote, in order to pay those undischarged obligations. As I understand it that is the most that has ever been allowed. The committee will bear in mind that such an allowance is made in connection with undischarged obligations incurred under a vote which is absolutely limited.

I understand the right hon. gentleman has said that some ruling was obtained to the effect that under the act which we are now asked to extend sixty days' time can be given, according to the Auditor General's statement, for the payment of obligations which had been incurred before the expiry of the act. My right hon. friend said however that there was some doubt about the legality or validity of that practice, and that in order to save any doubt the government had given instructions that no payments should be made after the date of the expiry of the act, according to the letter of the statute. I think he and all members of the government were wise in that respect.

Now, however, my right hon. friend, under this statute proposes that the government may incur any obligations it likes, or deems wise, under the provisions of the old act, an act which as we know very well, after the discussions we have had, provides for unlimited power, and which contains no limit as to amount. He suggests that obligations may be incurred at any time before the actual expiry of the act on May 1, 1932, and that those obligations may be paid at any time thereafter, no matter how long it is after the act has expired. I say there is no precedent for such practice.

To illustrate what I mean I should like to give an extreme case, because after all that is the best way to show it. For instance, this government might agree to pay a subsidy of \$10,000,000 per year to a railway company for a period of twenty years. So long as they created that obligation before May 1, 1932, the provisions of the last part of this section permits them to pay their obligations out of the consolidated fund during the whole twenty years. My right hon. friend will probably question that, but I say that is the effect of the section now before us. I will read it, because I think it ought to be on Hansard:

Notwithstanding the expiration of the Unemployment and Farm Relief Act, 1931, chapter fifty-eight of the statutes of 1931, by lapse of time, the provisions of the said act, and all orders in council and regulations made thereunder, shall not be deemed to have expired on and to have ceased to be in force on and after the first day of March, 1932, but to have continued and to be in full force for all purposes thereof whatsoever until the first day of May, 1932, and all undischarged obligations