

*Employment Commission*

civilization, on the edges of this great dominion, numbers of people who are growing poorer and poorer. There is no properly planned economy, no carefully considered distribution of our population. These people went from the dried-out areas and settled on the land thinking, as there is more rainfall, they could produce their own living. They are pioneers, and hardy pioneers. But as the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre said, in speaking of the apprenticeship system, why go back to the ideas of our ancestors, and proclaim that we must have hardy pioneers to live in these woodland districts? These people cannot pay taxes for education, and cannot get along because there is no prospect in life for them. Then they go on relief in the municipalities. As you go through Saskatchewan and Alberta you will see, on either side of the main lines of the great railway systems, some of the finest land in Canada overrun with sow-thistle and various kinds of weeds, land entirely abandoned and neglected; yet we are putting these hardy pioneers away out in remote districts where, though they have plenty of rainfall, the soil is sandy and there is not a chance in the world for them to make a living. This is a disgrace to our civilization. I feel that we can do better, and I hope this commission in the course of its long-range planning may develop some means of properly distributing those of our people who must be moved from the dried-out areas.

There are thousands now who must be moved from the woodland areas. They are destroying virgin timber which, if left alone, would become a great source of wealth without the necessity of any afforestation plan. I refer to lands which are naturally growing small spruce and timber. I could take hon. members over thousands and thousands of acres throughout the western provinces which will grow this timber without requiring any schemes in the way of afforestation. I believe we should get a better and saner view of this Canada of ours, and centralize our efforts instead of spreading them over so wide an area. We might have one main arterial highway and build other highways to that artery. That is connected perhaps with the problem of redistribution of population, which must be faced. Then there is the great program which the Minister of Agriculture has been suggesting to bring back into proper tillage large areas of western Canada which have lost their fibre and their fertility through over-cropping or what may be called wheat-mining. Therefore I feel, if there is anything I can say on this subject, it is that it would be better for this commission to give its thought

[Mr. Hayhurst.]

and attention, not to wider diversification but rather to centralization, because under the present system, with all the decentralization that has been going on in the past few years, Canada cannot expect to pay its debts.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: I think the suggestion made by the right hon. leader of the opposition, of substituting the word "plans" for "plan" in line 19 is a good one. I move that we strike out the word "a" on line 19 and substitute "plans" for "plan" in the same line. The clause will then read:

Recommend to the minister comprehensive measures constituting long-range plans of national development.

Instead of:

—a long-range plan of national development.

Mr. COLDWELL: I should like to commend the minister for including this particular paragraph in the bill. I was disappointed when earlier in the session the act to set up an economic council was repealed. I believe that this substitution is a step in the right direction, but I think it should stand out more or less alone. It is, it seems to me, no part of an immediate plan to cope with the serious condition which confronts us. It is something which, perhaps, we should have had years and years ago. Unfortunately we have been led to believe that Canada is a land of illimitable resources. That is not altogether true. I think posterity will condemn the generation to which we belong and the preceding one for having dissipated many of those resources which should have been the heritage of the people of Canada. I have reference, of course, to the depletion of our great forests, to the erosion occurring in connection with our land settlements, and matters of that description. I feel that the government today is charged with a heavy responsibility in endeavouring more or less to repair the wastes which have taken place in days gone by. I hope that this particular paragraph in the bill will be something more than a catch phrase. After all, if we are going to meet the condition which is upon us and will continue with us for a long time, we shall need to have a long vision and long-range planning of our natural resources and our human abilities in the country in which we live. That is why I wish to commend the inclusion in the bill of this particular paragraph. May I also say this: the hon. member who immediately preceded me referred to resettlement or the removal of persons from dried-out areas to other parts of the west; that has been going on for several years, and to my mind in many instances it represents a great tragedy. The lands to which people have gone without plan