

Supply—Labour

There is no valid reason in our opinion why the government of Canada cannot render assistance to these unemployed persons who are either ineligible for insurance benefits or have exhausted their benefits. This could readily be handled through the widespread chain of employment offices already set up, and unemployment assistance rendered in the same manner as unemployment insurance cases are served. Unlike other centralized programs of the government of Canada, these employment offices are located in each centre in Canada. With such machinery at their disposal, they are well equipped to handle this problem, and to relieve the provinces and municipalities of duplication of efforts. Placement of unemployed persons is the prime goal of the national employment service. They have full knowledge of all employable persons in the various communities, including records of employment, occupations, where they might be placed elsewhere, and other pertinent information. The conclusion seems almost inescapable that they are in the best position to know the needs of the unemployed and to administer assistance until such time as they can be placed in employment.

That is as much as I propose to quote from Mr. Goodfellow's remarks, but I might say I could not agree more completely had I made the remarks myself. They are almost entirely in accord with remarks which I made in the house two years ago on the same subject.

I want to go a little bit further and point out that, quite apart from the care of the unemployed employable who for one reason or another is not eligible for insurance benefits, there is the terrific problem of the load upon the municipalities, a load which has not been too severe in the past few years because of the period of almost full employment through which we have come, but one which could very easily become almost unbearable. I say in this regard that we should carefully consider that if and when the load does become heavy, if and when the time comes that the municipalities are faced with the unique position that they receive no assistance in this field from the provincial government and none at all from the federal government, you will then have the unfortunate prospect of placing upon real estate the entire load for the relief of unemployed employables, and I still contend that is a responsibility which should be taken by the federal government.

Mr. Gillis: Mr. Chairman, it would be sacrilege to allow this department to be dealt with by only one major speech. The first thing I want to do is to join with the minister and the hon. member for Hamilton West in paying tribute to Mr. MacNamara. I had the pleasure of working closely with him for practically the whole time he was with the Department of Labour, and in my judgment he was one of the soundest men with whom I have ever done business. He was a wonderful man to work with, and I think he did a

[Mrs. Fairclough.]

wonderful job in establishing the machinery of the Department of Labour because when he went there there was not very much to work with.

In my judgment the Department of Labour today is one of the most efficient departments of government, and that statement is all-inclusive from the minister down to the lowest official in the department. Of course there is no need of my saying anything about the parliamentary assistant. He is here with us and all members know what a genial person he is to work with and what an efficient person he is in a committee.

I am not going to attempt to cover all the ramifications of the department. In fact I am not going to offer any criticism at all. The minister and the cabinet met both congresses of labour and received from them detailed recommendations on practically everything that has to do with the economic and social life of the country. It would be redundant for me to repeat what they said. In any event, I am not going to be able to convince the government tonight that they should do all that the congresses asked them to do.

I think the best job an opposition member can do is sell ideas to the government, and tonight I am going to repeat two ideas that I have thrown out from time to time but as yet have not been successful in having adopted. The first idea I should like to try to sell the minister is that he, his department and his officials should do some thinking on the question of industrial pensions. I have said a good many times that industrial pensions provide no security for the worker. There are a large number of industries in this country that cannot afford pensions at all. Many people can never be brought under any kind of scheme that would offer them any security at all unless the government is prepared to examine the question of industrial pensions and come around to the idea of establishing a national retiring allowance on a contributory basis, contributed to by the employer, the employee and the government, under the kind of management you have in the case of unemployment insurance.

The industrial pension is only as secure as the industry itself, and when industries get into a shaky position from time to time the first thing many of them do is cut down their pension scheme. In many cases employers object to a contributory plan. They insist on establishing a plan themselves, and of course the idea is created that it is a charitable gesture on the part of the employer when it is no such thing. In the final analysis the worker pays for it himself, because any pension contribution the employer makes is charged to the operating cost of the industry,