

*Proposed Committee on Unemployment*

the same result. Those 50 construction workers took the warning when they saw the first sign of collapse. What happened after that? Well, the entire floor did not go. Did the engineer in charge of the job go down a couple of hundred feet and start to work up? No; he took the solid foundation on the side, put heavy beams across from the top and brought the slab timber back into position.

I think that is a perfect analogy to the present unemployment situation in Canada; and the man who was the consulting engineer on that job back in the twenties is the Acting Prime Minister of Canada in the House of Commons today. What I am asking is that he and the government learn a lesson from that job. Today in Canada it is not a case of a floor collapsing on a wheat elevator construction job. We have evidence from all sides of this house that the security floor is collapsing under over 500,000 of the working people of the Dominion of Canada.

In the collapse of that centre bin the workers were reaching for security. The unemployed today are reaching out because the security floor has collapsed. If they are eligible they get unemployment insurance, but at a rate that will permit no family to live on a respectable scale. It is just like that jack which I reached for over 20 years ago. But there are those under whom the security floor has collapsed who have absolutely nowhere to turn, because Liberal governments have failed to keep the promises made in August, 1945. I shall come to that in a few minutes.

There is one point I should like to make, and if I could not make any other I would be satisfied. Can we take a warning when we see it and do something about it, or do we have a government which wants to see the entire security floor collapse before they will do anything about it? I have been absolutely amazed at the speeches I have heard from the government side of the house. They have refused to take any notice of this warning of collapse and do anything about it. I am not any prophet of gloom—

**An hon. Member:** Oh, no.

**Mr. Winch:** —but I say that when the government sees and recognizes the fact, according to the figures of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg), that there are 524,000 applying for employment, that should be a warning. Mr. Speaker, when you have a warning it is time to act. We should not take a chance on a major collapse. Put the beams across from the top as they did on the job I spoke about a few moments ago.

I do not think any one of us wants to see a return of the hungry 1930's; but I do say to

the government that having been given the warning which it has now of over half a million unemployed, if the government does not move and the trend continues, then its callous indifference to the situation will be an indication that it has not learned the lesson of 1929 to 1939. I know something about it.

I have listened to members of the government and have heard the way they approach this problem of unemployment. I think the best thing that could happen would be for members of the government to have to live on unemployment insurance, or to have to live for a period of time as those who are not eligible for unemployment insurance and cannot get jobs have to live. They should have lived during the depression from 1929 to 1939.

In that time we had Liberal and Conservative governments. The people of Canada were anxious and willing to work. Their only desire was to be productive and respected members of the community. But they were condemned by the free enterprise governments to a life of too little to live on and too much to die on. The youth of this country were condemned to travel back and forth across the country, not wanted and not needed. They were the derelicts of the economic system and the maladministration of the government. Because the government of those days would not take any warning as to unemployment, what was the result? We saw in our Canadian democracy the use of tear gas and police batons, and we heard Liberal mayors reading the riot act. I know. I was there.

I do not think it is right in discussing this question of unemployment that we should hear government speakers, and in particular cabinet ministers, tell the house and thereby the people of Canada that 524,000 people asking for jobs at this time is only seasonal. We are being told something which really sticks in my craw. It is unpleasant. It is not unpleasant for the government, it is not unpleasant for the cabinet ministers, it is not unpleasant for any one of us who after tonight will be receiving \$10,000 a year less expenses, but it is very unpleasant, even if it amounts to only 2 per cent of our working population, for the more than 500,000 unemployed in Canada. They represent not just 500,000 unemployed; there are also their wives and kiddies. If we have any sense of responsibility whatsoever we will place ourselves in the unpleasant position of those half million unemployed and their families.

The government very definitely has a responsibility which in my mind goes back to August of 1945, at least. In August, 1945, a dominion-provincial conference was held