

Proposed Committee on Unemployment

a state of war, or a continuing threat of war, is a necessary prop to the economy which unbridled capitalism has built up.

That analysis is not made by the C.C.F. but by a very sane and sensible person.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Gillis: I suppose that members of the C.C.F. are not considered sane and sensible. As a matter of fact, Monsignor Coady went to the United Nations to lecture to the economic and social organizations of that body. In the face of statements from such people, and looking at the present picture in an unbiased way, I think we can agree that the hon. member for Vancouver-Quadra (Mr. Green) stated the matter very tamely and offered no recommendation. While the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg), in so far as his office permits him, has done a fairly good job of rationalizing the problem, he has offered no solution, and let me say that it is immaterial whether the number of unemployed today amounts to 300,000 or 600,000. It is a serious matter in any case. It would be serious if only one person were involved. That is clearly emphasized in a report appearing in an Ottawa paper on Saturday. It is headed: "Happy in apartment until their bills piled up", and deals with a young man who was evicted from his home and shot his landlady. He is unemployed. Only one person was involved in that instance but it is a serious matter. It is serious whether it involves one person, 300,000 or 600,000 who have to get up in the morning not knowing where their breakfast is coming from.

In his statement the Minister of Labour indicated to us that his department is watching the problem and keeping track of it. But the problem goes much deeper than the Minister of Labour is prepared to admit or his advisers are prepared to go in putting the story on paper and pointing it up for him. I have a dispatch from Washington indicating that United States jobless now total 2½ million and another one from the maritimes to the effect that about 10 per cent of the labour force are unemployed today. Someone will say: What has the United States got to do with the matter? It has a lot to do with it because whatever happens economically in that country is automatically going to spill over into our country whether or not we like it. We are geared pretty tightly to their economy today, and when ten or eleven per cent of our working force are unemployed it is serious.

When the United Nations economic committee summarized the problem last year they decided that when you have over 5 per cent of your total labour force unemployed

you have got to do something about it, not just appoint a committee or rationalize the question on the basis of figures but do something to cut down the percentage of unemployed and put purchasing power in their hands. Otherwise you are going to be in trouble before very long.

I think what most of us perhaps realize but do not like to say is that what we are now going through in Canada and the United States is the second phase of the cold war, and it is aimed directly at the North American continent. After 1945, when our former allies decided that they were not going to play ball and that world conquest was their only goal, they mapped out a program which they put into effect. Their program was to promote national revolution and lead us into a defence spending spree that would raise standards and create a lot of employment. They have succeeded in that purpose. What is the next step? It is to knock all that down, and that is being done today through the trade war with which we are confronted. Unless we are realistic we are liable to be caught napping, and I say this without fear of contradiction by those whom we look upon as employers in this country. I think it is also safe to say that it is true of the British today that they are going to sell where they can do so most easily and buy where they can buy more cheaply whether or not it means unemployment in another section of the world. I think that statement is borne out very clearly by a clipping I have which is headed, "Russia offers billion dollar sales to visiting British export group".

That particular group of thirty British businessmen, who went to Russia to find new trade channels, are not concerned about maintaining employment in Canada or the United States, or in Britain as far as that is concerned. If they can make a deal with Russia and can sell commodities on the world market and compete with others in other sections of the world they are going to do so. They are doing so.

When we look at our own unemployment problem we see what we are up against. For instance, our textile industry is pretty nearly out of business today and it is not a seasonal problem. The competition is not coming from Japan but largely from the United States, where standards are high and where wages are much higher than in Canada. Through mass production methods the commodity can be put on the market that much cheaper, with the result that our textile industry is going out of business. And it might be interesting to find out just how many of the textile operators in Canada are