

Proposed Committee on Unemployment

Mr. Rowe: Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Rowe: I don't interrupt very often.

Mr. Dickey: Is it a question?

Mr. Rowe: A question of privilege; and I do not interrupt very much. But when you do not answer my question I do not propose to let you put my question. I did not suggest that you cut down all these expenditures that you are talking about. I only asked if you thought the government could spend the money more efficiently than private individuals.

Mr. Dickey: And I answered it. I answered the hon. member's question. And then I turned to the question that had been asked by the hon. member for Greenwood—but apparently the hon. member for Dufferin-Simcoe (Mr. Rowe) was not listening at that time.

Mr. Rowe: I was listening. I would not have missed much if I had not, though.

Mr. Dickey: The question is as to what action should and can be taken by a government to meet a situation of this kind. The action being taken by the government has been indicated clearly by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg) and the Acting Prime Minister. They pointed out the steps under way. For example, in the recommendations made by the Trades and Labour Congress and the Canadian Congress of Labour they say that a greater encouragement to home building would provide a considerable number of new jobs. That is an excellent suggestion. The fact is, as hon. members know, that early in this session the government brought in legislation designed to encourage house building. We had a long debate in this house on it. We heard a great deal of criticism of it; but when it came to a vote very few hon. members did not support it.

Mr. Knowles: Order.

Mr. Dickey: The two congresses of labour should be congratulated on the constructive suggestions that they made in their recommendations as to what should be done. They dealt first of all with the Unemployment Insurance Act. That was approved and extended in 1950 when we were faced with a situation similar to the one we are faced with now. Since that time it has been further extended. If the facts of the situation indicate to the government that further amendments are required, I am sure there will be no hesitation in taking such action.

Then they asked for a nation-wide program of public assistance. In his remarks in this

[Mr. Dickey.]

debate the other night the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Howe) pointed out that in considering the estimates for this year the government thought that this was a time when a little more money should be spent on civilian projects, and the evidence of that is in the estimates which are before hon. members, and which they can read.

Then they asked that the public works program be speeded up, which is in the same field. They asked for an encouragement of house building. I have already indicated how that is being attended to.

Then they make a far-reaching and statesmanlike suggestion when they say that consideration should be given to increasing aid to underdeveloped countries. Some hon. members may not agree that that is a direct way in which to try to meet economic difficulties and solve any unemployment problems we may have in this country. But the fact is that that kind of assistance which creates better economic conditions in other parts of the world creates new consumers who will not only be purchasers of goods and farm products produced in Canada but who will also in return send to us the kind of things that they can best produce. These expenditures are definitely the kind of expanding expenditures that are being undertaken at this time and will bring about good results.

In accordance with the principles that this government has been following, the basic solution of this problem is the expansion of trade, both internal and external.

Mr. McIvor: May I ask the hon. member a question? Does the hon. member know of the cure for unemployment in depression times that was found and practised by the Minister of Trade and Commerce in his own office when he told his own workers to come in although there was no work for them and none in sight. He told them that their salaries would be paid as usual. Does the hon. member not think that that is a good cure?

Mr. Rowe: It is a good question, anyway.

Mr. Dickey: I think it is an excellent cure. As I was saying, the fundamental cure for these problems is an expanding economy, bigger and better external trade, better internal trade and a high level of investment. The policies of this government have been designed to bring about all those three things. Perfect success cannot be expected, and nobody would consider it impossible for some reverses to be experienced; but that is the program and that is the way in which this government believes that these problems can and should be solved.