

*Proposed Committee on Unemployment*

Vancouver some years ago to head the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada, and the west coast has not had a finer citizen than Mr. Bengough. When he takes a stand he does so because he sincerely believes in the policy he is advocating and is looking toward the best interests of the nation.

In making this submission on unemployment these men represented about 955,000 Canadians. They spoke for nearly one million of our fellow Canadians. The very fact that the submission was a joint one indicates its importance, because these two great bodies have not made a joint submission for several years. I have their submission here and I propose to quote from the first part of it because I think it sets out the problem in a very clear way. It opens in this way:

The joint delegation appearing before you today represents the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada and the Canadian Congress of Labour. We do so to discuss with you the serious current unemployment situation and to place before you certain recommendations and suggestions which we believe will relieve it.

Then we have the first heading: "How much unemployment is there?" The submission continues:

At the middle of December, there were 338,066 unplaced applicants at N.E.S. offices.

That of course was the approximate figure given by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg) in the house on January 26. The submission continues:

These figures are now nearly two months old. What has been happening since? Between mid-December, 1952, and mid-February, 1953, the number of unplaced applicants rose by over 69 per cent. If the same thing has happened this year—and worse may have happened—the number now must be over 550,000. This means that about one worker in every seven is unemployed.

Economists generally agree that, even under conditions of full employment, when there are enough jobs to go around, at any given moment there will be from 3 to 5 per cent of the workers unemployed because they have just left one job and not yet got another. This is what the economists call "frictional" unemployment.

I emphasize these words that follow:

Plainly, however, our present unemployment in Canada is far too big to be shrugged off as merely "frictional". Nor can it be merely "seasonal". The mid-December figure was 42.5 per cent above the year before.

Then the submission goes on to explain and point out where the unemployment is to be found, and it sums up the matter in this way:

For every region, the real percentage of workers unemployed is well above normal even for this time of year.

I was interested to note that they break down the situation into metropolitan areas, major industrial areas, major agricultural

areas and minor areas. Here is what the report says with respect to the different areas:

Of the metropolitan areas, three, Vancouver-New Westminster, Quebec-Levis and St. John's, Newfoundland were in "substantial surplus"—

The reference is to substantial surplus of labour.

—five, Montreal, Winnipeg, Hamilton, Calgary and Edmonton, in "moderate surplus", and only two, Toronto and Ottawa-Hull, in "approximate balance". For these areas, "substantial surplus" means over 9.9 per cent unemployed, and "moderate surplus" 5.9 to 9.9 per cent.

Of the major industrial areas, twelve, including Saint John, Moncton, Three Rivers, Lake St. John, Brantford, Cornwall and New Glasgow, were in "substantial surplus", and seventeen, including Halifax, Windsor, Oshawa, London, Sudbury, Sydney and the Niagara peninsula were in "moderate surplus". Only one, Guelph, was in "approximate balance". For these areas "substantial surplus" means over 11.9 per cent unemployed, and "moderate surplus" 6.9 to 11.9 per cent.

I would remind hon. members that these are not January or February figures but go back to December. I continue:

Of the major agricultural areas, two, Charlotte-town and Riviere du Loup, were in "substantial surplus", over 13.9 per cent unemployed, seven were in "moderate surplus", 6.9 to 13.9 per cent unemployed, and five in "approximate balance".

Of the minor areas, twenty-one were in "substantial surplus", twenty-four in "moderate surplus", 6.9 to 13.9 per cent, and twelve in "approximate balance".

The submission indicates that this unemployment was not in a small group but in a wide variety of industries in Canada. Then the submission quotes from the *Labour Gazette* for January as follows:

During the last few months, the expansionary trend in output and employment in the Canadian economy has lost some of its momentum.

These labour leaders conclude the first part of their submission with these words:

But the number of workers hasn't. The growth of employment is not keeping pace with the growth of the labour force. The result, inevitably, is increasing unemployment. Present unemployment is far beyond "frictional" or "seasonal". It is neither localized in particular industries nor in particular geographical areas. Whatever the causes of this alarming situation, it is clear that something drastic is happening to the Canadian economy and that something must be done about it.

One would have thought that a submission of that kind made by these responsible Canadian leaders would have been taken very seriously. Mind you, some of the members of the cabinet may have treated it in that light, but we find again that even these leaders were given a lecture. This time the lecturer was not the Acting Prime Minister but the Minister of Finance (Mr. Abbott). He undertook to show these labour leaders where