

Supply—Labour

device it proposed to employ in trying to ascertain what should be done about the Unemployment Insurance Act.

That is the situation. I think we must now remind the government of the composition of that royal commission. I have no quarrel with the competence of the persons who are on that commission, but I join with the labour congress in complaining about the failure to have as a member of that commission someone who represents labour opinion and the labour point of view. After all, this is a royal commission designed to study an act to which the employers as well as the workers contribute. It seems to me it is desirable that the representatives of the trade unions and the representatives of the workers of this country should have someone on it.

Let it not be said that such a person would be a prejudiced party. We did not hesitate, and I think properly so, to appoint members of the medical profession on the royal commission examining into the proposal of medical care insurance. There are employers represented on the royal commission examining the Unemployment Insurance Act, but how this government can hope to justify the kind of remarks made by the Minister of Labour to the labour congress the other day about the way this government consults with labour on matters of interest to it, in the light of its refusal to have a representative of labour on this commission, is beyond me.

Here is what the labour congress said in this regard at page 44 of the brief presented to the government on March 14 last:

Any illusions we still had concerning appropriate appointments were dispelled when you appointed the committee of inquiry into the Unemployment Insurance Act. Here is an act which by its very nature is of direct and immediate concern to over 4 million Canadian wage and salary earners. They and their employers contribute directly to the fund established under the Unemployment Insurance Act. The administration of the act is through a tripartite commission, including a commissioner representative of the employee interest. The act further prescribes the appointment of an unemployment insurance advisory committee, a national employment committee and regional and local employment committees on which organized labour is represented. Presumably here if anywhere organized labour should have been represented on the committee of inquiry. Yet there is not a single member of that committee, however qualified in every other respect, who can claim to represent the employee interest. This act of omission on your part drove home to us better than anything else the fact that the opinions of the Canadian Labour Congress and of organized labour in general are of little or no significance to you—

“You” meaning the government, of course:

—in the determination of your policies. When we ventured to complain that there was no representative of organized labour on the committee of inquiry we were told in very peremptory language that there was no need for one and that to have included such a representative would have injected a sectional interest into the work

of the committee. Presumably there is no sectional interest involved when the medical, dental and nursing professions are represented on the royal commission on health services. We cannot help but conclude that the failure to consult the congress for nominees to various commissions, boards and agencies and the appointments made without consultation (such as certain appointments to the national productivity council) indicate a deliberate policy of bypassing the congress wherever possible.

I am not rising here to defend the congress, but the congress of labour is the largest gathering of trade unionists in this country. It seems to me that the submission they have made about the failure of the government to include labour representation on the royal commission is sound. I hope that the government in whatever reply it seeks to give to this point will not say that the reason labour was not represented was that it did not want to have parties with an occupational interest represented on the commission. If that argument is made it will not stand water, because that very course was followed in some of the other appointments to the commission. The employer groups are represented certainly by some of the members of the commission, all of them able, good Canadians. Certainly the government has not hesitated to recognize occupational interest in the appointment of the royal commission on health services.

Mr. Chairman, there are two other points I would like to make based upon observations in the report of the advisory committee for the year ending March 31, 1961. I have asked the parliamentary secretary to tell us whether or not it is the case that the unemployment insurance commission feel that \$25 million is not adequate and that it has asked for a much larger amount. If this is the case, why has the government not acceded to the request of the commission? That may be a question that can only be answered by the Minister of Finance, but he is not piloting this legislation. He has done it in other years, but for some reason or another what is a financial matter is now being turned over to the Department of Labour, unlike the practice in other years.

Mr. Pickersgill: Apparently the Department of National Defence, if we look to the treasury benches.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): I was looking at something a little more agreeable, and that was the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Labour.

Mr. Benidickson: Only one cabinet minister is here; a good one, of course.

Mr. Chevrier: That is debatable.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): The Minister of Finance, in his budget statement to this house