

*Employment Commission*

without common sense and to say he is embarrassing himself, but a minister is not likely to do that sort of thing.

Mr. STEWART: I am only taking the paragraph as it reads, and it says that the commission shall investigate and report upon proposals for the carrying on of public works and for projects to aid in providing employment. If it means anything at all it means that these projects, whether they originate with the municipality, with the province or with the dominion, will be referred to this commission for the purpose of seeing whether as a whole they fit into the general scheme and whether or not they should be undertaken. If that is not the meaning what is the commission to do?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: It does not say anything of the kind; my hon. friend is inserting words which are not there. According to his reading of the section the commission is to investigate and report upon every proposal, but there is no such word there at all. The section relates to proposals which the commission itself may wish to take under review, or proposals that the minister may wish to refer to it. It does not provide that everything has to be referred to the commission.

Mr. STEWART: I did not suggest that everything should be referred to it; I did not use the word "everything," as the Prime Minister knows.

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: That was the interpretation of my hon. friend.

Mr. STEWART: I was trying to find out the plan of the government, whether they were going to refer all these propositions to the commission, or a half, a quarter or a third of them, or possibly none at all.

Paragraph agreed to.

On paragraph (e)—Programs of public works.

Mr. BENNETT: This is more difficult. It is quite obvious that as far as this year is concerned the proposals submitted to parliament in the supplementary estimates will have been dealt with without the assistance of the commission. This subsection contemplates that the commission shall recommend to the minister measures with respect to programs of public works and projects of the dominion, the provinces, the municipalities, and other agencies, intended to aid in providing employment in a manner which will serve to mobilize and coordinate their activities. In reading this one is almost driven to the

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

use of words that might not be regarded as very complimentary. Just what subsections (d) and (e) can possibly mean in the world of practical affairs I cannot understand. These people are going to recommend to the minister measures with respect to programs of public works and projects of the dominion, the provinces and the municipalities. The minister is not bound by such recommendations, and as far as this year is concerned he is not affected by the work of this commission at all. I confess that I find it difficult to see any practical value that attaches to these subsections.

Mr. ROGERS: I would say that the first part of this subclause is controlled entirely by the latter part, "intended to aid in providing employment in a manner which will serve to mobilize and coordinate their activities." I would take it, for example, that a national employment commission, in reviewing the possible direction of the expenditure of money for public works, might very well advise whether from the standpoint of employment or from the standpoint of social utility it was better to erect a very expensive police barracks in western Canada or whether, on the other hand, it was preferable to put that same amount of money into community halls, let us say, in various parts of the dominion. It seems to me that is the kind of guidance that would have been very desirable during the past five years. Perhaps my right hon. friend will not acknowledge that, but I have a vivid impression of the kind of pressure that is brought to bear upon the Department of Labour, and I assume upon other departments as well, with respect to expenditures for public works, and as I review what has happened in the last few years I am not at all sure that all the expenditures for public works were well conceived.

Mr. BENNETT: I would not expect the hon. gentleman to think that; I would have been greatly surprised if he had.

Mr. ROGERS: I could go into details.

Mr. BENNETT: My hon. friend will have the opportunity; at the moment I have the floor. The hon. gentleman referred to a barracks in western Canada. What he is endeavouring to hint at is the barracks erected at Calgary; that is the only place where barracks of a permanent nature were erected for the permanent forces of Canada. The position was simply this, that for long years an effort had been made to erect some sort of suitable buildings in which men could live. We had a permanent force; part of it was stationed at Calgary. They had no suit-