

answer has been given makes it clear that the government has no policy in respect of unemployment insurance. If current rumour is true—and I think in this respect it is true—when the last dominion-provincial conference was held the government, which had announced to parliament in the early portion of the present session that it would discuss unemployment problems with the provinces, did not place before the provinces any proposals in that regard. I understand they asked the provinces to state their views, although they had called the provinces together among other things for the purpose of laying before them—at least, so we were led to believe—something in the nature of a national scheme of unemployment insurance. If I am misinformed in this connection, I hope the minister will correct me, because I think this House of Commons ought to know whether the government of the day made any proposal at the dominion-provincial conference, and, if so, what the proposal was. Hon. members are entitled to have that information.

Dealing with the question of unemployment, there are two natural main divisions, one which concerns temporary unemployment due to an emergent situation, and measures necessary to meet it, and the other which concerns unemployment as an inevitable incident of industry and the permanent measures essential to meet a situation which unavoidably arises in connection with modern industrial organization. With respect to the first, the present government's policy is that of the dole, and, with respect to the second, they have no policy at all. Such policies as they have with respect to trade and the like, their fiscal policies, are all of a nature to strangle trade instead of encouraging it, and more than anything else are responsible for unemployment in Canada reaching the proportions it has to-day.

In the remarks I read a few moments ago, the Prime Minister said that, by its policies, the government hoped to reduce the number of unemployed. If we are to test their policies by the numbers of unemployed we have to-day we must see how completely those policies have failed. I believe we cannot hope for much improvement, because the government's policies up to the moment have had the effect, and unless changed will continue to have the effect, of making trade more and more difficult, not only externally but internally.

I wish to repeat that unemployment, in my opinion, is Canada's most urgent national problem; that as a temporary measure to deal with the present emergent conditions the government should immediately adopt the policy of appointing a representative

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

national commission which will have power to supervise all expenditures of money voted by this parliament for relief purposes, and which would cooperate with the provinces and municipalities in the administration of unemployment relief, and in an endeavour to provide work for the unemployed. It should do all that could be expected of a body of that nature to coordinate the efforts of all agencies, and to provide parliament with information which will be of service to it in meeting future similar situations. In his statement to-night, the minister has said nothing about plans for dealing with similar problems at another time. If there had been a national commission working during the last two and a half years, it would long ere this have been familiar with the situation from coast to coast in all its phases, and this parliament to-night, instead of looking at a picture which it is impossible to describe, would be debating concrete measures based on recommendations made by a competent body. To meet the very emergent and grave situation which exists I say the government ought still to appoint such a body, and appoint it immediately.

Then, as a permanent measure, I think the government ought immediately to announce to parliament its intention of introducing a national system of unemployment insurance. I say to hon. gentlemen opposite that a national system of unemployment insurance is the policy which the Liberal party in Canada stands for, and the policy which we intend to put into effect if at any time in the future we are again entrusted with office. We would precede that policy by policies which will serve to provide employment by reviving industry and trade. Should unemployment continue to be as it has been in the past, or is at the present, we would deal with such a situation through a representative national commission through which we would seek a mobilization of all the forces and agencies which it would be possible to bring into cooperation to provide work for the unemployed in as many directions as possible by direct employment on the part of employers, and as the result of such assistance as might be necessary on the part of municipal, provincial and federal bodies.

Again may I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the necessity of the government exercising more in the way of supervision over moneys which are voted for unemployment relief, and of this House of Commons being given the right which parliament should have, and which has been taken from it, of controlling all expenditure on unemployment