

Miss Macphail's Letter

(Continued from page one)

had ear-marked the revenue for old age pensions. In this way the government of Sweden had received in excess of three hundred million dollars and more recently the government had taken over the liquor monopoly. Mr. Caldwell suggested that we should follow the example of Sweden.

Mr. Bennett made a sympathetic speech in support of pensions for the blind, marring it a little however, by preparing a landing net for Mr. Dunning, Minister of Finance. He stressed the difficulty of securing the money and his understanding of the problem facing the Finance Minister.

Mr. Dunning, after complimenting the mover and expressing sympathy with the idea contained in the motion, went on to state that "Parliament has now sufficient to do in finding the necessary funds for those activities with which by the Constitution it is charged. . . . I should not like to hold out hope that there will be legislation this session implementing this resolution."

The two women members made speeches distinguished for their brevity. Mrs. Black pointed out that if one commits an offence against law, civil or criminal, that person is fed, clothed and kept warm, but if nature commits a crime against the individual it is very difficult for such a one to get help, and she asked consideration for the blind.

I suggested that thirteen years of effort on the part of the blind ought to be rewarded by a subsistence pension and pointed out that in times as difficult as these, when sighted and highly trained people cannot get work, there is no hope at all for the blind in that regard. I further expressed the opinion that we had raised the hopes of the blind last year and had caused a great deal of suffering of mind and spirit as well as continuing privation by not putting into effect the legislation that was favoured by all the members.

Mr. Cameron McIntosh, who was chairman of the Committee of Industrial and International Relations which considered the matter last year, took a strong stand in favour of immediate action.

Denton Massey is no stranger to the people of Ontario. We have long heard his broadcasts and read of his work with the York Bible Class. It was quite fitting that he should be the one to move a resolution asking for very careful consideration for the youth of Canada. He proposed an enquiry into the need for technical training of youth and the creation of a National Youth Re-establishment Commission. Mr. Massey is a striking figure, well over six feet in height, handsome, with a flair for clothes. His speech of presentation was easy to listen to—possibly too wordy, a general parliamentary fault—but he dealt sympathetically and convincingly with his subject.

In beginning, he referred to the experience he had had which had given him a unique knowledge of the problems of youth. He reminded us that, previous to 1929, there had been no talk of a youth problem, but between that time and now, we had seen diminished salaries, lowered wages, apprenticeships discontinued and unemployment rampant. Agencies to take care of unemployment had been fairly quickly set up, but these did not meet the need of youth who now lost the opportunity to learn how to earn. Education had been curtailed and apprenticeships in trades practically discontinued. What jobs youth got were "blind alley" jobs—leading nowhere—but there were few even of these, so that idleness was the lot of great numbers of young people. Idleness was, he said, the incubator of national disaster and led to unbalance, discontent, dependency and sometimes despondency.

The problem of re-establishing youth, Mr. Massey went on to say, is a practical problem. They need jobs, but not only that; in addition, youth needs re-establishment morally, educationally and socially. Fifty per cent. of young people, in 1935, remained in school until seventeen years of age; forty-three per cent dropped out. Of children of all ages at school, only two-thirds ever reached the final year in the public school; one-half did some high school work; one-fifth proceeded to

matriculation; one-tenth to university, of which a percentage graduated.

Our technical schools are doing an excellent job, Mr. Massey said, and he gave an example of such a school in his own riding, in which 1800 pupils were enrolled in day classes and 3000 in night classes. He showed that, in the last twenty years, technical education had grown to such an extent that it now absorbed 25 per cent of the students in secondary schools. Yet, in spite of this fact, trained artisans among young people are scarce. As a method of improving the situation, he suggested apprenticeships in industry with some allowance for payment in the early stages being made. He had a good word to say for Mr. A. E. Corrigan's campaign for scholarships by the National Government which would enable brilliant but poor students to remain at school, and, in conclusion, he reminded us that one generation of youth had been lost and it was our business to save the present one.

T. C. Douglas, C.C.F., Weyburn, Saskatchewan, supported Mr. Massey and urged that a system of national scholarships be set up. In Oxford and Cambridge 38% of the total enrolment are assisted students and the British Government gives scholarships to no less than 73,000 university students. That sufficient technical schools were not available was proven, Mr. Douglas said, when, in Winnipeg, unemployed young men, within forty-eight hours, filled every available place in two schools open for the training. He pointed out that a prominent British economist had recently stated that in certain areas in Great Britain in which some industries were picking up, it was very difficult to obtain trained technicians solely because of the lack of training in apprenticeship and in the technical schools in the last five years.

Mr. Douglas, in speaking of rural youth, said: "They are not banded together. They have no collective voice, and as a result they have been very largely forgotten. Yet there are thousands upon thousands of them. I know of homes where there are several grown sons staying with their parents on the farm. The farm does not require that many to work; yet, they have no place to go. Farmers who wish to hire them are not in a financial position to do so. It is just possible that, by co-operation with the Federal and Provincial Governments, steps could be taken to subsidize farmers to an extent which would enable them to employ these young men."

In supporting Mr. Massey's resolution I told the story of a family in an Ontario town in which the mother had received the allowance until the last child was sixteen, but now with all the children working, they were getting so little that it was impossible for her to keep the family fed and clothed on their earnings. The eldest son, with a first-class certificate, getting \$3 a week; the eldest daughter, 50 cents an afternoon; the second son, \$1 a week, assisting in a theatre, and the youngest boy \$1 a week on a paper route. In her letter to me, the mother said: "On the Allowance I could manage . . . to keep their clothes clean and mended, cook vegetables and plain meals for them, but now we cannot. My eldest boy says he is going to leave home. Where can he go? Ruth's boss says he wishes he had enough business to keep her all day. I worry so, sometimes I am sure I will lose my mind."

I expressed the view that youth only wants a chance to help themselves; that they dislike being babied and pampered. But we must help them, that they may get a start. "Youth is idealistic. They want to live for an ideal, something bigger than themselves, but they need training and jobs." I urged for night classes in rural schools or churches that would enable adults to become aware of the rapid and far-reaching changes which are taking place and to adjust their thinking and lives to the changed conditions. I suggested that all the equipment, library, piano, light, heat, etc., in both these institutions ought to be available to youth and adults who wish to live fuller and more constructive lives. Co-operation should be a major subject, as well as other phases of economics, citizenship, music, dramatics, manual training and domestic arts.

We are emerging from the competitive age and high schools and

universities ought to be teaching the philosophy and history of co-operation rather than the outmoded idea of beating the other fellow, getting to the head of the class, achieving success by overcoming others. The Minister, Mr. Rogers, made a brief and excellent speech in acceptance of the resolution which would, he said, be considered by a commission which would study the whole problem of unemployment.

The Prime Minister in reply to a question put by Mr. Woodsworth, assured the House that Canada is not involved in an Empire defence programme.

At last we have had the vote on the Trade Treaty, which passed with a large majority and the items are now being discussed in committee. It was supported by the Government,

C.C.F., Social Credit group, Mr. Stevens and myself, the vote being 175 to 39. In the lobby afterwards I heard the followers of Mr. Bennett being nicknamed "The Thirty-nine Steps" after the well-known book written by the Governor General.

AGNES MACPHAIL

House of Commons, Ottawa,
March 14th, 1936.

In Memoriam

WARD—In loving memory of my dear husband, Wm. John Ward, who passed away March 22nd, 1934.

God shall clasp the broken chain,
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Sadly missed by his wife, Elizabeth E.

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