

the programs which have been offered by the government to assist native people. In 1964 an estimated 36 per cent of the Indian population received social assistance or welfare. In 1977-78, between 50 per cent and 70 per cent received social assistance. In a matter of 13 to 14 years the number of Indian people who received social assistance increased from 30 per cent to between 50 and 70 per cent.

● (1700)

One must then draw the conclusion that we are not actively providing economic opportunity, training or jobs. In the past ten years, there has been a total investment in the Indian communities across Canada of \$250 million, creating 10,000 jobs. We must create 20,000 to 30,000 new jobs in the next 10 years. What is happening? Economic development funds are being withdrawn and budgets are being reduced. I will give the House a comparison. In the fiscal year just ending, in Wabasca, the people of Chief William Beaver of the Bigstone band said enough is enough and decided to walk from northeastern Alberta to Edmonton, a distance of 240 miles, suffering severe hardship. Indeed, some women were in their fifties and sixties and had arthritis. Little children also joined the walk. But they completed that march because last year alone \$1.5 million was spent in that community on social assistance and welfare, but only \$40,000 was spent on economic development. That shows the priority that the present government places on economic development in native communities.

The Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) has now been given the responsibility, through the western Canada development fund which gives priority to the economic development of native peoples, to search out and develop the economic viability of various reserves so that native Indians people on the reserves can be gainfully employed. We hear stories from the Secretary of State (Mr. Fox), from Indian affairs, from manpower, about various programs that the government are throwing out all the time to create employment.

Certainly, some programs were developed. There was the Canada development program where communities submitted projects and said: "These are the things we're going to develop in our communities and it is going to create so many man-hours of employment." But they are stop-gap measures. They are like frosting. There is nothing underneath. They remind me of the great big cake one sometimes sees in the lobby of a hotel, with candles and frosting, but if one cuts through the frosting there is nothing but a cardboard shell. There is nothing inside; there is no substance.

We must project a five or ten-year program and say, "This is what we are going to do with economic development."

I hear the comment that we are spending too much money on Indian people. Federal government expenditures for Indians increased 14 per cent per capita in real terms between 1970-71 and 1978-79, a period of nine years. At the same time, there was 128 per cent per capita growth in other federal social programs. Other federal social programs increased 128 per cent, but programs and expenditures aimed directly at the

### *Unemployment*

Indian people in that same period of nine years increased only 14 per cent. We know that that 14 per cent does not even keep up with inflation.

By all conservative estimates, Indian unemployment in Canada reaches anywhere from 35 to 75 per cent, depending on the locality. I ask all hon. members to think for a moment. What constituency would accept an unemployment rate ranging from 35 to 75 per cent? Not one. There would be such a furore developed in the community that hon. members opposite would not be sitting in the House of Commons; they would be thrown out on their ears.

The same would be said of any government which allowed that kind of unemployment to exist in any community. I am talking about white communities. However, it is an accepted fact that there is 35 per cent to 75 per cent unemployment right across Canada in Indian communities. We create situations where we are prepared to spend, on one hand, on one reserve, \$1.5 million in welfare, which is destructive, rather than spend \$40,000 for economic development in a community which would create jobs. These are not my figures. These are figures that come right out of the survey prepared by the Indian affairs and northern development department. I have more copies if hon. members want them.

Let us talk for a moment about the human misery of an individual who must go home day after day to his wife and children and knowing he cannot provide for them because he is unemployed. Must he not say to himself periodically, "I wonder what my children think of me because they know I am not working and cannot get a job?" Is it any wonder that violence breaks out in the community? Is it any wonder that there is an abnormal amount of alcoholism on many reserves? Is it any wonder that young children—and I mean young children, 14, 15, 16 years of age—who should be looking forward to great opportunities, wake up some morning and decide that they do not want to live any more, that life is not worth living and they take their own lives? It is something to which we must all address ourselves. It is too bad that the hon. member who raised a point of order would not stop talking long enough to listen to what I have to say, because I think it is important.

Is there a way to stop this erosion which is taking place on reserves in Indian communities? Certainly there is. Many of the people living in Indian communities today are illiterate. Others have minimal education. What is the difference? We are prepared to spend from \$30,000 to \$100,000 educating young people raised in white communities so that they can become productive citizens. The Department of Employment and Immigration buys training positions in educational institutions. Indian people do not take advantage of these because the entrance requirement in vocational schools is usually grade nine education at least, and they do not have that.

● (1710)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. gentleman but his allotted time has expired.