

The Budget—Mr. T. C. Douglas

get the money by using idle men and idle resources to create new wealth. We are throwing away \$6 billion of \$7 billion a year in wealth potential because this government has no program, no plan and no vision.

Unemployment is costing us money in terms of government expenditures. When you have 526,000 people unemployed it is costing the people of Canada money for unemployment insurance. For those who have used up their unemployment insurance benefits, there is welfare which is paid jointly by the federal and provincial governments. There is the cost of providing for those who have not been able to pay premiums for medicare and health insurance, the cost of providing them with health services. All this means a drain on the treasuries of this country.

● (4:20 p.m.)

But the real cost of unemployment has to be measured in heartaches; it has to be measured in terms of human misery, the frustration and the insecurity which it brings not only to the unemployed themselves, but to their families. What does it mean to families whose incomes are reduced, who may not be able to make the monthly payments on their homes, who may not be able to provide their children with advanced education? What does it mean in terms of frustration, insecurity, lack of dignity? How can these things be measured? Do they mean nothing to the government? I sometimes wonder whether any members of this cabinet ever in their lives walked the streets of one of the cities of Canada looking for a job. I doubt it. I doubt whether they know or understand how an unemployed person feels. I am sure that if they did they would concern themselves much more actively about this problem than they have done to date.

What does the government intend to do about this matter? There are many things it could do. I notice that in the United States, where unemployment has reached a figure of 4.3 per cent, a figure which the President of that country thinks is much too high, they are releasing additional funds for public housing, not only to provide homes but also to provide jobs. Does the government here intend to follow a similar course? When we stop and realise that in Canada we need at least two million homes and that we have all the material with which to build them within our own borders, we are bound to ask ourselves what has gone wrong. Mr. Speaker, if someone from Mars were to come here and find that we needed two million homes for our

people, and that we had all the lumber and bricks, all the plumbing fixtures and electrical fixtures needed to construct those homes, that we had more than half a million people idle, but that we did not possess the initiative to bring those factors together, he would come to the conclusion we were mentally deficient.

The government has done nothing about unemployment. The Prime Minister answered us today by saying they were putting money into the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. It is true they are putting some money into that program, but the program is being nullified by the hostile economic climate in which it operates. How does one induce new industry into the underdeveloped areas of Canada to start new projects if at the same time interest rates are raised, government programs are cut back and consumer credit restrictions are imposed? The Minister of Regional Economic Expansion is trying to help the undeveloped areas of Canada pull themselves up by their boot strings. At the same time, the Minister of Finance is cutting the boot strings, so they slide back to where they were, or even lower.

All this restraint, both fiscal and monetary, which the government has imposed has been carried on, according to the government, in order to stop the cost of living rising further. I would consider it a very high price to pay for stopping the rise in the cost of living, Mr. Speaker. But it has not stopped the rise in the cost of living. In fact, in February, if one compares the figures with those of the previous February, it rose by more than the average for the whole of last year.

The Minister of Finance, in his budget statement, said himself there had been no slowing down in the rate of increase of prices, wages and other income. So not only have we imposed upon the most defenceless group of people in Canada, the unemployed, the burden of fighting inflation, but we have not even begun to win the battle. The reason we have not begun to win the battle is, in my view, that the government has wrongly diagnosed the illness from which the body politic is suffering. The government has mistaken the symptoms for the disease. It continues to follow the false assumption that this country is suffering from too much money chasing too few goods when, according to the Economic Council of Canada, 20 per cent of our population live below the poverty level and another 20 per cent just above it. It is not a question of too much money as far as a very large part