

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Douglas: The points of view expressed by other groups have, in many cases, been very successfully silenced. We in this group ever since June 18 last have refused to take a destructive attitude with reference to public affairs. Even before this parliament was convened the Leader of the Opposition was calling upon all groups to pledge themselves to voting no confidence in the government.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Douglas: Even before parliament met—

Mr. McCleave: Irresponsible.

Mr. Douglas:—every newspaper, every radio and television station was telephoning members elect and asking them what they were going to do about turning the government out. The members of this group made it abundantly clear before parliament met and after it assembled that we were not here just to turn the government out; that we were here to support any legislation which in our opinion would grapple successfully with the national and international problems confronting Canada. We recognized then, as we do now, that Canada faces a serious situation. As to the international monetary exchange crisis of last June, let me say that in spite of the Prime Minister's optimistic statement this afternoon I am not convinced it has entirely disappeared. There is the subject of economic growth and unemployment. There are the difficulties facing agriculture; the fact that we lag far behind other western countries in health and welfare programs. There is the need for new trade policies in the light of changing trade patterns throughout the world. We said that all these things demanded aggressive action and dynamic leadership. We said we were prepared to support the government if they produced this leadership and that we would vote against them if they failed to do so. Our votes have not been motivated either by a desire to get the government out or, God forbid, by a desire to get the Liberals in.

But I submit, Mr. Speaker, that having sat since September 27, because of the indecisiveness of the government and also, I think, as a result of a good deal of obstruction by the official opposition, this parliament has been reduced to a state of such impotence that the only answer now is to give the people of Canada an opportunity to go to the polls.

Let me just mention a few things we had hoped might be done during this session. We had hoped the government would grapple with the need to plan this nation's economy. I do not need to elaborate on that subject

Alleged Lack of Government Leadership

because, fortunately, in the last 12 months everyone has apparently become converted to the idea of economic planning. But all we have had to date from the government is the prospect of four boards composed mainly of part time members meeting periodically in Ottawa; four boards reporting to four separate ministers without machinery for co-ordinating their efforts or their plans. In many cases their terms of reference overlap and, above all, no provision has been made for a national economic development fund without which these four boards are simply groups of men holding little meetings in a corner.

We are still faced with serious unemployment. The Prime Minister talked this afternoon about the growth in the gross national product, but the fact remains that this growth has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase in employment. Unemployment continues to be a source of serious anxiety. The speech from the throne talks about providing one million jobs over five years. I have not seen anything in legislation which indicates how these million jobs are to be created, and if we do create them this would only take care of the young people leaving our universities, schools and technical colleges to enter the labour market during that five year period. We would still have to make provision for the half million or so who are presently unemployed in addition to those who may be displaced as a result of modern technology and automation.

The matter of trade is to the fore. I am convinced that Britain's application to join the European common market having been rejected, this country will find itself facing circumstances whose difficulty we have not yet begun fully to appreciate. I would have expected that during the past four or five months the government would have put forward some ideas about the future development of our trading program in the light of such events as the emergence of the European common market and the United States trade expansion legislation in order that Canada, one of the great exporting nations, might have some part in this trade revival and this changing trade pattern all over the world. But we have had no statement other than that there is to be a ministerial meeting of GATT.

The subject of medicare is to the fore in every province in Canada. The government announced the appointment of a royal commission in December, 1960, and we are told the commission is to report some time in June or July of this year. That is a long period of inaction. As a matter of fact, since the provision of health services lies within