

*Adjournment Debate*

The canteen at the Calgary postal plant is operated by the Canadian National Institute for the Blind for the Department of Public Works. When it was first opened in April of 1975, full, 24 hour service was provided. It soon became apparent to CNIB that this service was not being used to a great extent, and during its first 12 months of operation \$20,000 was lost. As a result service during the night shifts and at weekends was reduced to vending machine service.

A senior officer of Canada Post Office prevailed on CNIB to restore full service. This was done, but just before last Christmas CNIB proposed withdrawing completely and the service was stopped. Again the intervention of a CPO official prevented this.

As of April 1 last discussions between DPW and Treasury Board have brought about a changed relationship between caterers and employers in all federal government departments across the country. The new arrangement allows caterers to withdraw from unprofitable situations while at the same time limiting their profit to 6 per cent on productive shifts. While the Calgary situation did not bring this change about, the change does affect the Calgary problem. Canada Post Office continues to look for alternative ways to provide equal service to all shifts.

Both the Postmaster General and myself are concerned to see that everything possible is being done to provide the level of service necessary to maintain the morale of the postal workers.

THE CANADIAN ECONOMY—REQUEST FOR ESTIMATE OF  
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AND LEVEL OF INFLATION FOR THE  
YEAR

**Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe):** Mr. Speaker, on March 16 I put a question and a supplementary question to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Macdonald). If I may repeat my question, first of all I asked:

Considering that last month's brightening of the unemployment picture proved transitory and noting that the unemployment rate has remained near 7 per cent for nearly a full year, can the minister tell the House when improvement in the unemployment rate may be expected and what he anticipates the unemployment rate to be for the balance of this calendar year?

Unfortunately rather than give the House the information to which I believe hon. Members are entitled—certainly the Department of Finance officials have some estimate of the unemployment level in Canada for the coming year, if not even for two years ahead—the minister used a stall. He said there was a budget coming down and that in the context of the budget he would be pleased to refer to that matter.

Then I asked a supplementary question as follows:

In view of the minister's forecast of a 5 per cent rate of growth in the economy in the current year, could he explain the basis of his forecast of the rate of growth at 5 per cent with a specific indication of job creation for the year, the level of inflation he anticipates and the trade deficit for the current calendar year?

Again the minister unfortunately said:

Mr. Speaker, I will be glad to do that in a budget debate.

This is nothing but a stall. Earlier this evening I had an example in the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs of a very deliberate stall on the part of

[Mr. McRae.]

administration members who sit on that committee. They were, in short, protecting the minister from any further questioning. I think it is too bad that the government has chosen to put a shroud of secrecy around what is the favourable or unfavourable nature of our economic indicators in the country.

● (2220)

In tonight's adjournment debate I sincerely hope that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Trudel) will shed some light on these important subjects. Budget or not, there is no reason why the people of Canada should not be given the true facts as to what the Finance Department of the government believes to be in store for the coming years. I say that because in sharp contrast to what is happening here in Ottawa we find that in Washington the administration and Congress are going out of their way, year by year, to give more and more detail as to what they see in the nature of the economic future of unemployment, inflation, real growth, their trade deficit and their own budgetary deficits, and in fact it is now the law of the land in the United States that they have to show these figures at least two years in advance. In short, instead of talking only about the 1977 fiscal year at the present time, it is now the law in the United States that they have to be showing 1977 and 1978 figures.

They have even gone beyond that. In the President's economic report and in the annual report of the council of economic advisers in Congress they are giving a five year estimate as to what is to be anticipated along the lines of unemployment, employment, and the trade figures. For example, I find it very startling that while we cannot extract these figures from this administration, in the United States they are predicting that their output from 1975 through to 1981 on an annual basis will be 5.9 per cent per year, and they point out that their inflation rate will be somewhere around 4 per cent by the year 1981. That is the type of openness they are now experiencing as far as the administration and Congress in the United States are concerned. Unfortunately the public in Canada is not being given this type of information. That is the purpose of my question.

I believe that tonight the parliamentary secretary should be able to indicate what his department is anticipating. After all, the government is asking for an estimate to clear \$19 million for some 690 personnel. Incidentally that estimate is 15.5 per cent higher than last year, well above the 8 per cent guideline the government is asking other people to abide by under the anti-inflation program. With that type of personnel, including highly technical people and economists, there is no reason that the parliamentary secretary tonight cannot indicate to us what the government estimates to be the employment level for fiscal 1976-77, what the government anticipates the unemployment level will be for those two years, what it sees as the inflation level for those two years, what it sees to be the real growth in this country for those two years, what it anticipates the trade deficits to be, both on a merchandise basis and on a total trade deficit basis, and what the budgetary deficits, based on the current expenditures and revenue forecasts which are available to the government, are likely to be in fiscal 1977-78.