

The Budget—Mr. Stanfield

cycles meet your election-timing plans, but that approach surely overlooks the economic and social perils involved in such a policy.

We are now being asked to give final approval of the budget presented to the House by the Minister of Finance last December 3, I say that to do so would be a betrayal of our economic principles and a betrayal of the people of Canada. The three opposition parties in the House differ on many things—but there is one thing on which we agree today, namely, that this government has failed miserably in its responsibilities to Canada, to the Canadian economy, to almost two million Canadians directly affected by the scourge of mass unemployment and to the Canadian people as a whole because we are all involved in this tragic situation.

Those who are unemployed are seeing their human dignity melting away with their savings. Those who are not fortunate enough to have the right to unemployment insurance benefits—and they are legion—have to go on welfare. Welfare may well be a human right in a civilized society, but for thousands and thousands of Canadians today it is, and it must be, a symbol of failure. I say to them, as I say to you, sir, in the vast majority of cases it is not their failure; it is the failure of this government that sits so smugly before us. These are the men that must bear the responsibility for the present situation. The Prime Minister and some members of his cabinet boasted of their willingness to put up with, as they have expressed it, a high level of unemployment in order to win the battle against inflation. Have they ever won that battle? The Prime Minister replied in the affirmative. Inflation is licked, he told the Canadian people a few weeks ago. But sitting on this side of the House I am probably a better authority on the outcome of the government's torture test. I say that inflation may have taken a licking, but it is still ticking.

Therefore I must inform the right hon. gentleman, if he does not know it already, that in this world wishing does not make it so. You do not solve problems merely by saying you have solved them. I know that to a government to which style and image are much more important than accomplishment, that might be a hard truth to accept; but it is the truth, and the self-admitted failure of the Prices and Incomes Commission to achieve any viable agreement is surely an indication of this. But if there is no indication that inflation is licked, at least the government has succeeded in another part of its endeavours: it has increased unemployment to an extent unparalleled for years.

• (8:20 p.m.)

I have already mentioned the effects of mass unemployment on the unemployed and their families—the loss of economic security, the loss of human dignity and the loss of faith in society. But the results of unemployment go far beyond the unemployed because mass unemployment affects everyone in the country and it affects, for the worse, the whole Canadian economy. It means lost opportunities for business. It means higher taxes for those who are employed and who must pay for the

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welfare for those who cannot get jobs. It means a general loss of production, expressed in the gap that exists between the potential of the economy and its actual performance. This has been estimated at \$80 million a week under the lower unemployment figures of a month ago. We can only guess what this loss is today.

That is the reality of mass unemployment. That is the reality behind the statistics that the government presumably finds so comforting today. I remind the Minister of Finance that behind statistics usually stand human beings: there is the human factor involved. That is why it is possible for a six-foot man to drown in six inches of water. These are the statistics that the minister tells us result from the government's economic policies, and presumably from the budget which we are now debating.

Let us look for a minute at some of the statistics. They show that one out of every 12 men and women in this country is now looking for a job. They show that one out of seven of our young people under the age of 24 is now involuntarily out of work. They show that there are now 183,000 more Canadians unemployed and looking for work than there were a year ago. They show that almost one-third of those unemployed today have been without jobs for four months or longer. They show that there are 123,000 fewer people working in Canada today than a month ago. They show that there are 130,000 more people out of work and looking for work than there were a month ago.

We all know that the Minister of Finance enjoys making predictions, although generally I think he prefers to keep them to himself. But in this case, unfortunately for him, he inadvertently made his prediction in public a week or so ago. At that time the minister gracefully conceded, without apparently too much concern, that there would be an increase of up to 100,000 in the number of jobless Canadians from December to January. In fact, he indicated that this was about the normal increase between December and January.

Mr. Benson: Seasonally adjusted.

Mr. Stanfield: Seasonally adjusted, the minister says. Seasonally adjusted! I say "nonsense" to the minister, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Benson: Read the statistics.

Mr. Stanfield: Perhaps the television misled me. Perhaps I did not hear the minister at all. Perhaps it wasn't him at all saying that he expected that the actual number of unemployed would go up between December and January. I hope he is not going to deny that, because I heard him. And as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, that has been the normal increase. That was the increase a year ago. It was little less than that the previous year. That is why the minister was prepared to predict a similar increase this year. Sometimes the minister likes to appear to be a betting man. I wonder if he bet on the number of unemployed Canadians this month. If he had bet on the increase between December and January, he would have been out just about 30 per cent, or to put it in other terms he would have been out by some 30,000 human beings.