

*The Address—Mr. S. Robinson*

Throne. In the past several months I have taken the opportunity to get out and listen to the concerns of my constituents in Burnaby by going door to door in different parts of my riding. I have listened to the views of my constituents, young and old, men and women. As well, I have held a series of accountability sessions and, of course, received many letters and telephone calls from my constituents expressing their viewpoints on the issues of the day.

I have noted over the past four years a significant shift in the priorities and in the mood of the people I represent. In my view, Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne which was tabled by the Government fails to come to grips with the various concerns of the people I represent. I would group those concerns into three major categories. First, and certainly most important, is the failure of the Government to recognize and respond to the very serious and devastating economic crises facing the people of our country. For most, of course, it is the question of unemployment, of layoffs, of insecurity and the need to create jobs.

The second major area of concern—one which, of course, in the Province of British Columbia is even greater as a result of the vindictive and destructive policies of the provincial government—is that we must preserve and indeed strengthen essential social programs which we in this country have for many years taken for granted. Now, in the face of the neo-conservative mood which seems to be prevalent in the Official Opposition and at the provincial level, and, indeed, in the Government itself, important social programs are being whittled away and dismantled.

The third area—in many ways the most important one because, indeed, it is a question of basic survival—is the end of the madness and waste of the arms race. Certainly, if I would have to identify one issue above all others which has grown in significance to the people I represent in Burnaby over the years, it would be the very important question of disarmament.

I will address first the issue of job creation and economic security. Certainly, Hon. Members of this House are all too familiar with the grim statistics of unemployment and layoffs in our communities and in communities right across this country. In Burnaby, for example, according to the latest official figures, there were over 5,000 of my constituents receiving unemployment insurance. Many more have had their unemployment insurance benefits run out and have been forced on to the welfare rolls. In some cases they have been forced to return home or to go back to school, if indeed they can afford to do so in the face of cuts in post-secondary education. A recent two-line advertisement in a Vancouver newspaper seeking clerical assistance resulted in over 425 applications from qualified people who were desperate for any kind of work.

● (1230)

Behind these grim statistics of thousands and thousands of people who want to work and cannot find jobs, lie far too many human tragedies. All of us as Members of Parliament have had the agonizing experience of having to deal personally with

individuals who are victims of this Government's economic policies. Just yesterday in my constituency office I received a telephone call from a young man who said he was in graduate studies at Simon Fraser University. He was desperately trying to find a job but had been told by his advisers—indeed, in looking for work it became clear—that there was nothing for him.

In the almost five years I have represented Burnaby, I have not yet heard the kind of tragic feeling of hopelessness and despair that this young man related to me. He said he felt he could do one of three things. First, he has a kidney for sale in the United States. What kind of society have we come to when our young people seriously contemplate selling an organ of their body in order to survive? Secondly, he said he had spoken with the Manpower counsellor who said to him, perhaps only partly in jest, that maybe his only alternative was to turn to criminal activity in order to survive in British Columbia today. We know too well there has been an increase in crime in our community. I believe this Government must accept some of the responsibility for that because of the bankruptcy of its economic policies.

The third and final alternative he set forth was leaving the country he was born and raised in because he felt there was nothing left for him here. Again I ask you, Mr. Speaker, what kind of message is it that this Government and its allies at the provincial level and in the Official Opposition are sending to the people of our communities, particularly young people, when they are so desperate they feel they have no alternative but to leave the country?

“Help me find a job”, he said. “I want to work. I don't want welfare. I don't want unemployment insurance”. How do we as individual Members of Parliament respond to that plea? Should I quote to him the comments of the Minister of Finance in March, 1982, when he said: “If you go overboard saying I am going to fight unemployment, create jobs and all that, well, the first thing you know you create a loss of confidence”. Well, Mr. Speaker, what about the confidence of these young Canadians who want to work? Should I remind him of the words of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) in June of 1982 who mused and shrugged his shoulders and said: “Well, it is always possible to scare the hell out of people by creating more unemployment”. Perhaps he might be interested to hear those comments. Hundreds of thousands of young people right across this land share the agony and personal despair that this young man expressed so eloquently to me in my constituency office.

In addition to the problem of unemployment and the inability to find work, there is another great crisis, that of the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who are working now but, because of technological change, face the insecurity and fear of losing their jobs.

We have heard much talk of this in the House in recent months. Once again I would like to draw to the attention of the House a personal example from my constituency, a letter which I received and which I think documents, far more clearly and eloquently than any statistics or reports could do,