

*The Budget—Mr. Martin*

few days, to tackle a problem to which we have been urging this government to address itself for three years now. Then there is, of course, the practice in the United Kingdom. So I say to the Minister of Finance that before this debate is over we should know what are the depressed areas that the government has in mind. We should also know what will be the requirements in order for a particular community or area to constitute itself into a depressed area, to take advantage of this double depreciation provision.

The United States department of labour lists 99 areas in the category of "substantial and persistent labour surplus". What they have done there we can do here, and what they have done there quickly we should at long last, if we are going to do anything about this serious problem of unemployment, do at the earliest possible moment. This debate will terminate today, but all matters having to do with the budget will not be completed for possibly another month. Two months will have gone by during which municipalities and corporations could easily have made preparations to take advantage of what could be a very constructive way of dealing with this problem of unemployment.

The operative criteria in the United States for determining what is a depressed area is about 6 per cent of the labour force unemployed over a specific period of time. In Britain the criteria is between 4 per cent and 5 per cent. If we were to apply those criteria to this situation of course the whole of Canada would be a depressed area, because unemployment in our country now reveals the fact that 8.2 per cent of our labour force is unemployed.

Therefore I say to the Minister of Finance, if this government really wants to make a constructive contribution to the alleviation of unemployment let it address itself at once to the request that I make today. Otherwise we will be justified in saying to this government that it has announced a policy the value of which will be effective, if at all, only in the long term, just as the Vocational Training Act, just as the Productivity Council Act, just as the so-called small business act were all designed to deal with the long term, although the impression has been created and will continue to be created that they represent part of a vigorous campaign on the part of this administration to deal now, not tomorrow, with the problem of unemployment.

If the Minister of Finance wishes to give the house any indication of the government's concern for unemployment, let him not delay

[Mr. Martin (Essex East).]

any longer in meeting this particular request. Let the government name the depressed areas. Let us have all the definitions required, so that municipalities and industries can take the necessary steps to collaborate with the government in providing relief against unemployment which continues to grow day by day, as the figures of the government itself reveal.

There is one other matter with which I wish to deal. It is one of those matters not referred to in the budget but which has a corollary relationship to the problem of unemployment, a problem which I think should have been mentioned in the budget. This has to do with the state of the unemployment insurance fund.

It will be recalled that the day before we adjourned for the Christmas recess I asked the Minister of Labour if he would table the report of the advisory committee of the unemployment insurance commission, following the meeting that was held by that body in October last. The Minister of Labour said the government had not yet studied the report, and until such time as it had studied the report it could not be tabled. We adjourned the following day at six o'clock, and we were informed by the newspapers and the radio at about seven o'clock that night that in a clandestine way the Minister of Labour, in the dying hours of the last day, had tabled the report which I had asked for the day before. He did not tell the house that he had tabled the report, and consequently it was not possible for speakers on this side, discussing the budget on the last day before adjournment to make any reference to this report. But the report is a significant document, and I am sure it will be read by every worker, every employer and every responsible Canadian, because it reveals the perilous condition which faces this trust fund. It is a trust fund; it is not a government account but a trust fund contributed to by the employers and employees of this country to the extent of 80 per cent, the contribution by the government of Canada on behalf of the Canadian taxpayer being only 20 per cent.

This device of the Minister of Labour, this slick trick in handling a report of great consequence in such a way as I have described, is not new. This is not the first time such a device has been used when information of this kind has been presented. The same practice was followed by the Minister of Labour in the dying days of the last session of parliament. A few days before parliament prorogued last August we asked for another special report of the advisory committee of the unemployment insurance commission. We