

The Address—Mr. T. C. Douglas

Mr. Douglas (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): While the private sector continues to operate on a "business as usual" basis, the government's austerity program is hurting the economy and creating hardship for whole sections of the Canadian people. Allow me to cite one or two examples, Mr. Speaker. The fisheries services are being cut at a time when the fishing industry faces a crisis. The salmon catch in British Columbia has this year been only a little better than half that of last year. This situation calls for the hiring of more biologists and the expansion of our biological stations. Instead, these are being severely curtailed. The situation is further aggravated by the government's new licensing program. Under phase 1 of this program 1,000 vessels from the B.C. salmon fleet were eliminated last year, and 2,500 vessels will be eliminated this year. The Minister of Fisheries is quoted in the Vancouver *Sun* of September 4, 1969, as saying:

We are moving towards a commercial salmon fleet manned by professional fishermen.

I suggest that if the minister's policies are continued we will be moving toward the day when most of the salmon fleet will be owned by the fish-handling companies and the independent commercial fisherman will be out of business. Consider the problem of western Canada, which is facing its greatest economic crisis since the 1930's. The sole contribution of the government to solve this crisis has been to increase the amount of money which the farmer can borrow on his farm-stored grain. The government's austerity program has left the prairie farmers in a distressing condition and the prairie economy in a state of disarray. However, no group has suffered more from the effect of rising prices than the old age pensioners and the recipients of veterans allowances. The old age pensioners have an increase this year of \$1.58 a month, which is supposed to represent 2 per cent of their income, but in the meantime the cost of living has risen by 5 per cent. The recipients of veterans allowance have received no increase at all. The government continues to evade its responsibilities with respect to this group. The government's austerity program means that these groups, who have suffered so much already from rising living costs, can expect no help whatsoever as long as the government maintains its austerity program at their expense.

• (3:20 p.m.)

The government has over the years talked about a war on poverty. This is the war that [Mr. Gilbert.]

never began. It is a war which poverty is winning by default. Almost two-fifths of our population live below the line of deprivation, and one-fifth are below the poverty line. The plight of our Indian, Eskimo and Metis people cries out for compassionate and humanitarian policies. The conditions on some of our Indian reserves beggar description; they are a national disgrace. The government uses its austerity program as an excuse for doing nothing. Even worse, it uses inflation as a cover for imposing reactionary programs that are reminiscent of Herbert Hoover.

The government will have great difficulty in persuading the Canadian people that it cannot cope with the problems of poverty, because it did not have difficulty finding \$17 million with which to refit the *Bonaventure* before it went into mothballs. The government had no difficulty finding \$49 million for the hydrofoil, and \$80 million for the automobile industry. Now we read that Union Station in Ottawa, which is to be demolished in a few years, is to have \$600,000 spent on it. My guess is that it will probably be over \$1 million. It is being renovated for federal-provincial conferences. Is this the government's idea of social priorities? Is this how the Prime Minister puts into effect all the fine, moral precepts which he enunciated this afternoon? Emerson once said, "What you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you say".

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, our civil servants have been made the villains and the scapegoats of the government's fight against inflation. No intelligent person will object to staff reductions on the basis of efficiency. However, the present cuts in staff mean that the civil service has been largely overstaffed, or essential services are being cut. The government should tell us which is the reason. The government's treatment of civil servants makes a mockery of collective bargaining. In essence, the government has said that any increase in salaries must be compensated by a reduction in staff.

At a meeting at Mount Gabriel Lodge in June of 1968, between Treasury Board officials, deputy ministers, heads of crown corporations, etc., guidelines were established for civil service collective bargaining, and they have been rigorously applied. We in this party contend that if there are to be government guidelines, they ought to apply to both public and private sectors and to all forms of income such as profit, rent, interest, capital gains and dividend payments. They should not be imposed solely upon the wages and salaries of civil servants.