

The Budget—Mr. Winch

the public at large must absorb at least 10 per cent of the responsibility. In addition to all these benefits there are to be cuts in personal taxation, but there is no mention of where the money is to come from to pay for all this. As I have said before, the opposition is inept, careless and lackadaisical and they are operating today as they did in the days when they formed the government of this country.

Mr. Harold E. Winch (Vancouver East): Having looked at the time, Mr. Speaker, I get the impression I shall have to defer most of my remarks until we come to a later stage. Listening to the oratory of the hon. member for Carleton (Mr. Bell) this afternoon and to the oratory of the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Browne) this evening I think that at this time, when we are facing many weeks, and perhaps months, of work in this House of Commons, it might be advisable to remind the government of words which should be reiterated whenever a government begins to become imbued, as this government is, with arrogance. I say this because of the remarks of the hon. member for Carleton and the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway criticizing the opposition for criticizing the government.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we should all remember on occasions and keep in mind at all times that opposition in parliament is not a luxury to be indulged in occasionally but that it is a necessity. It is the one incontestable advantage which a free government offers independent and responsible people. It is the responsibility of the opposition to give warning, not in order to frighten but in order to instruct. The duty of the opposition is to oppose, is to criticize, is to warn, and no plea of state interest such as that made by the hon. member for Carleton this afternoon can relieve the opposition of its responsibility and obligations. I think the government and its supporters should remember those words. They are not mine. They are very famous words which have been used in the past on similar occasions.

Why is it necessary to warn? It is necessary because of conditions, existing or threatening, which are or may be serious. Listening to the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway, a supporter of the government, one would take it that there were no problems in British Columbia, that everything is rosy there. Yet there are items and factors of which notice must be taken. I note that according to the dominion bureau of statistics, in British Columbia in the first seven months of last year—and these are the latest figures I had available immediately after hearing the speeches today—7.7 per cent of the working

force was out of work. I notice also that consumer spending in British Columbia was down by \$30 million as compared with the similar period of the previous year. Motor vehicle sales in the province were down by 8.4 per cent and sales of building material were down by 25.5 per cent. I find that in Vancouver the number of employable unemployed on the welfare roll was double that of a year ago. Those are some of the things which have been brought to our attention only through the medium of the D.B.S. figures, and although the figures I have mentioned are not completely up to date they are an indication of the situation.

Anyone who has read the Vancouver newspapers during the last month will know that the jobless total in Burnaby is up 260 per cent over the same period last year, city construction in Vancouver is at an eight-year low, the housing industry has declined in 1960 which was characterized as a black year and on January 1 there were many newly completed homes still unsold and unoccupied.

The government cannot close its eyes to these things. It is our responsibility to point them out, warn the government about them and ask what the government is doing to meet the situation by way of planning, policies and legislation. The government appears to adopt a lackadaisical attitude. It glosses over the unemployment situation as though it did not exist or would take care of itself if it were ignored. Apparently that is the attitude of the Minister of Finance. The minister, speaking in Moncton recently, as reported in the *Winnipeg Tribune* of January 11 said:

—unemployment that does exist is due to automation in industry, an increase in the labour force and seasonal conditions.

Is that not a marvellous conclusion? The government has known about automation for years. It must have been warned about this trend by its own departmental officials. It has been warned about automation on the floor of this house year after year. Over the years we have asked how this problem would be approached, faced and met. We are told that one of the reasons is automation. The minister says the problem is seasonal unemployment. There has always been seasonal unemployment in Canada but this does not mean it will always be with us nor that we should ignore it today.

The minister referred to the advantages of the winter works program. I am not going to deny that much good can come of the program although it appears to be the only immediate policy the government has to meet the present unemployment situation.