

Business of Supply

four subsidiary bodies or boards that operate in conjunction with the advisory council. I could have taken action on this series of appointments, but I wanted a full representation of all organizations on these boards. I am still waiting for one very important organization to make its nominations. I hope when that is done this council and advisory body will come into operation.

I think that all I have had to say, Mr. Speaker, has demonstrated rather clearly that the government of Canada has provided for the development of manpower resources in this country. Our program of manpower resources stands up well in comparison with that of any other country in the world. We have shown interest and attention to the problems of our youth and have provided aid to the students themselves. Their employment problems are real and significant. Upon consideration, the opposition house leader, acting for the absent Leader of the Opposition, might agree to withdraw the motion.

Mr. Baldwin: The minister will need a much more convincing argument than he has given us today.

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this debate on the motion introduced by the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Stanfield). Before proceeding may I say how pleased I am to see the minister in the house, fully recovered from his illness. I wish him well in the future so far as his health is concerned. It is good to know that he is alive and well.

I have always admired the minister's facility with words. To use an old expression, he can charm a bird out of a tree. Unfortunately, Canada's critical unemployment situation requires more than honeyed words, and the minister's responsibility is to find jobs for Canadians, not for the birds. I was amused to hear him say a few moments ago it is not a federal responsibility but a joint responsibility. How he has changed! I can recall that when he sat in a certain section of this chamber he and his colleagues always insisted that unemployment was the responsibility of the federal government.

The minister has been very wordy. However, no matter how many words are employed to slough off responsibility or to cover up the Department of Manpower's obvious inability to cope with current unemployment problems, the hard and brutal fact remains that there are close to half a million Canadians out

[Mr. MacEachen.]

of work today. Much has been made by the government of the fact that this year's mid-February unemployment figure of 6 per cent is below last year's figure of 6.4 per cent for the same period. But this sort of thing will not impress the 473,000 Canadians who are unemployed. Nor will it impress many Canadians who wonder why this country should tolerate a high rate of unemployment in the midst of affluence and plenty.

• (5:20 p.m.)

It would be interesting to hear further from the minister's own lips the reason that his new and modernized department has been so unsuccessful in coping with the problem of providing jobs for Canadians. When this department was set up we were assured that it would make Canada's labour force mobile, skilled, and flexible enough to overcome the old difficulties created by seasonal unemployment and regional recessions. So far the department and the minister have been indistinguishable from the old Department of Labour and the minister's predecessors in office.

It is good, Mr. Speaker, to see that the minister is alive and well. This house has seldom had the pleasure of seeing or hearing the minister since the last general election gave us a new Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and a reshuffled cabinet. In the old days scarcely a day went by but the minister was on his feet, spreading wisdom and reassurance on the troubled waters of the house. Indeed, he spoke on almost every conceivable subject and seldom felt confined by his own particular portfolio.

How things have changed! Today we hardly ever see him and almost never hear him. His name is absent from the press that once knew it so well. The air waves are silent in regard to him and his department, despite all that happened at the leadership convention of the Liberal party. Perhaps it is the new system of rotation of ministers that has clipped his wings. Or perhaps it is the new system of cabinet discipline that has been imposed by the iron hand of the Prime Minister. Some hon. members across the way laugh at that, but it is not unusual to hear certain individuals on the government side say, "Boy, he is the boss, and that is it. You must not step out of line or you may lose your portfolio." At the moment I am not looking at the Minister of Manpower and Immigration when I say that. Whatever the fact may be I hope that before we come to the end of this debate the minister will give us the benefit of his views. He has