

Alleged Failure to Reduce Unemployment

We all remember the bright days of promises and pride when Trudeaumania was going to be the cure for all our problems. It hasn't quite worked that way. Whatever happened to the Marshall plan for the maritimes? What about the promised plans and programs for eastern Ontario agriculture? They seem to be still on the drawing board. These, and numerous other policies, if implemented would have assisted in wiping out regional disparities and stimulating the economy.

Far from stimulating the economy, the government has allowed it to run down. In Newfoundland the fishing industry is being quietly allowed to die, and in the maritimes the shipbuilding industry is slowly suffocating. I might interject that on a recent trip through the maritimes, vacant farms were much in evidence. But the Prime Minister appears on the list of best dressed men. This may be satisfying to him, but it does little to alleviate the uncertainty and fear that are brought on by economic hardship.

One recalls the general disappointment across the nation at the throne speech which opened the new parliament. It is now apparent that it was an accurate reflection of the government's inability to recognize or deal with the basic problems of economic growth and full employment. The government's legislative program is one of the skimpiest in years. We have had no sign from the government that it is prepared to act to deal with the problems of housing, taxation and interest rates, and the growing gap between the well-to-do and the depressed as outlined by the Economic Council in its last report.

It is not because the government has not had the benefit of good ideas and suggestions that there has been an almost total dearth of activity.

● (5:50 p.m.)

One recalls the suggestion last March by the then secretary of state for external affairs, who has now been moved to the other place, which called for a national conference to co-ordinate economic development and combat regional disparity. Mr. Martin's suggestions were never acted upon. Along with dozens of others, they were cast aside by this rather curious government. But the throne speech, weak and uninspired as it was, was still more glittering than the actual performance has been. It is safe to say that the government has done nothing to deal with unemployment, to stimulate expansion, increase growth, deal with disparity, bring down interest rates, build homes or deal with

[Mr. Downey.]

any of the thousand and one urgent problems that are pressing in on us at this time.

As an example, last September's throne speech promised a prices and costs review board. Where is it? Surely, this would have been a simple and routine matter to implement. Why was it not done? Where is the policy for regional development? We have had theories, reports, task forces by the dozen in the areas of agriculture, housing, transportation and taxation, but nothing concrete has been done. I say let us have fewer task forces and more positive policies. Let us have fewer reports and greater implementation of the reports we have. Let us have at least the shadow of an attempt to bring the power and resources of the government to bear on the problems that affect Canadians from coast to coast. Among them is unemployment which is rapidly becoming serious and endemic.

Mr. A. D. Hales (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion which is before us. At the outset, I might say that I propose to relate my remarks to those people who form one of the largest groups of unemployed. I refer to those between the ages of 14 and 19 and 20 and 24; namely, the students, graduates, undergraduates and those who are looked upon as drop-outs.

Before proceeding with my main remarks, may I say that although I consider myself to be a very non-partisan member of this house I cannot sit here and let the statements of the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) go unchallenged. He told this house that the percentage of those unemployed continued to decrease the minute the Liberals took office. Other members of this house know that when the Liberal party took over from the Conservative party they received built-in programs which they were able to keep in force. They were able to govern by using the same programs.

I might ask who instituted some of these programs in those recession days when we took over. Who brought in the great housing program, the vocational training program and the great shipbuilding program? Consider what is going on today since this government let that shipbuilding program lapse. What about the great sales of wheat that the Conservative party made and the great trade crusade that was launched by the then minister of trade and commerce, the hon. George Hees? What about the roads to resources program and the Bladen report which was the