

Regional Unemployment

years, Mr. Speaker, doing such wonderful things for the people of Canada.

Get out! Get out before it is too late. Get out while people are still prepared not to hang you on the way out.

An hon. Member: Louder.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member keeps his ears open he will hear. In addition to the unemployment figures it is shown that the able-bodied on relief in Newfoundland at the end of March numbered 4,100 men and women. These people no longer qualify for unemployment insurance so we had to add them to that figure. Today I am told there are 63,120 people drawing unemployment insurance benefits. I have not had time to find out why so many should be drawing benefits when there are 35,000 unemployed. There must be some explanation of that.

It is a desperate situation, Mr. Speaker. Newfoundland is a province where 20 per cent—that is a conservative figure—of the labour force is unable to work because they cannot get jobs. Yet this government has the gall to stay in office. It should resign immediately.

The hon. member who just resumed his seat led us to believe we should congratulate the government. Congratulate them for what, Mr. Speaker? For 19.2 per cent unemployment? For the 4,100 able-bodied on relief?

An hon. Member: What did you do when you were a minister?

Mr. Crosbie: Let us in and we will show you. Are we to thank the government and the Department of Regional Economic Expansion for reducing expenditures in Newfoundland despite the economic situation? The Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Lessard) himself said in committee several days ago, as reported in issue No. 12 of the committee's proceedings, that in 1974-75 his department spent \$68.3 million in Newfoundland. In 1975-76 the department spent \$68.2 million. In 1976-77, last year, when the economy of the province was going down and unemployment was high, how much did DREE spend in Newfoundland? The minister says he expects the final figure to be close to \$60 million. Why did DREE spend \$8 million less in Newfoundland last year, when the economy was worse, than it did the year before? And the minister said that this year, with 20 per cent unemployment in the province and 4,100 able-bodied on relief, he hopes to spend \$60 million in the province. Mr. Speaker, that spending will not even keep pace with our inflation rate.

● (2030)

If the minister wanted to keep up the level of spending of three years ago, he would have to spend more than \$80 million this year in the province. Are we to get down on our hands and knees and thank members of the Canadian government for what they are doing to overcome this situation? Not on your life. We regard them with absolute contempt for the way they have handled the economy of Canada in the last five years. In

[Mr. Crosbie.]

Newfoundland we cannot wait for the chance to give them the works in the next election.

What can one say about the economy of Newfoundland? What has happened to our economy in the last few years?

An hon. Member: You left it.

Mr. Crosbie: Mr. Speaker, I am here to speak on behalf of the people of Newfoundland who sent me here last October 18.

An hon. Member: Yes, you left Newfoundland.

Mr. Crosbie: Hon. gentlemen opposite are very sensitive. They are pretty touchy. What has happened under this magnificent Liberal government? What has this government done in the last few years to our Newfoundland economy? In 1975 the gross provincial product went up 0.8 per cent. We had less than 1 per cent growth in 1975 under the great Trudeau government.

An hon. Member: But the Tory government of Newfoundland has some responsibility.

Mr. Crosbie: The Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Horner) should resign from this government. But he is committed to it now. Yes, our economy grew 0.8 per cent. In the next year, 1976, our gross provincial product went up by the magnificent total of 1.2 per cent under this wonderful Liberal government. The forecast for this year is that it may go up in real terms by 2 per cent. That is the record of the great Liberal government. That is how it is swelling the economy in Newfoundland and eastern Canada.

And what has this government done about the inflation rate? What is the record of this magnificent government, the hem of whose pants we are supposed to kiss every day or else be accused of bad taste in the House of Commons? What has it done about inflation? While we are being crucified with unemployment, what has the government done about inflation? Why, Mr. Speaker, it has done magnificently. In 1975 the cost of living went up 11.5 per cent in Newfoundland. While our gross national product went up 0.8 per cent, the government outdid itself with permitting an inflation rate of 11.5 per cent. So much for its attempts to control the central banks and the currency. And what did it do the next year, in 1976? It twisted our arm even further.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. member would permit a question.

Mr. Crosbie: I do not have the time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Guay (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Since the hon. member has been talking about the economy of Newfoundland, would he say what he would like to see happening in that province? Let him tell us what he would like us to do, instead of criticizing. Let him be concrete, and let us hear what he wants.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.