

In my region, the problem is not one of whether the benefits are going to be raised or not. The minister should have thought of changing the unemployment insurance regulations by requiring, for instance, a smaller number of stamps. To qualify for benefits, a worker needs 30 stamps but he can never work long enough to accumulate that many unemployment insurance stamps.

In my constituency, hundreds of workers are not eligible for unemployment insurance benefits because they have not accumulated enough stamps. After two, three, four or five weeks of discussion, they are told that this is a regrettable situation, but they will have to seek help elsewhere.

This is when they are directed to welfare offices. For a family of five, six or seven children, welfare is no fun. However welfare allowances are expected to double in my region since the workers have been unable to accumulate stamps and are not entitled to allowances.

If the minister or his officials had made the effort to further study the allowance increase so as to permit the unemployed to cope with a higher cost of living, they would thus have solved the most urgent problem. In addition, the minister told us that loans in the amount of \$150 million will be granted to the provinces through a fund intended to stimulate the economy and this money will be used to finance, during the year to come, job-creating investment projects.

Mr. Speaker, there again loans are involved. The government merely says: We are ready to support the provinces, the municipalities and the companies wishing to borrow, so that they can get deeper into debt.

We have only two money sources, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) says, taxing and borrowing. And these estimates point to borrowing.

On this matter of borrowing, I read a newspaper article reporting what the Quebec Premier thinks of the benefits offered the provinces by the government. I believe that he was expecting something other than availability of loans. I quote:

For the first time in several years, the Quebec Minister of Finance can indulge in the luxury of choice between several options: borrow slightly less than last year on the money markets or improve Quebec's credit rating; or maintain borrowing at its present level and use surplus liquidity to convert into debenture loan part of the short-term commitments of the government toward school boards, for instance; or borrow more this year and increase capital expenditures and several extra-budgetary items such as government investments in SOF and Soquem.

As concerns the cyclical stabilization fund dealt with by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), here is what I read in a newspaper:

It is therefore quite a service that Edgar Benson has rendered his Quebec colleague. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the new \$150 million fund is not yet exactly the contingency assistance fund called for last June by the premier of Quebec.

Mr. Bourassa had proposed the establishment of permanent machinery; the program announced by Mr. Benson will terminate in a year and a half. Mr. Bourassa wanted the contingency assistance fund to be replenished by statute with certain federal taxes, which would vary according to the needs; the funds made

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available to the provinces will come from the consolidated revenue of the central government and their importance is left entirely to the discretion of the latter. Mr. Bourassa had suggested that the contingency assistance fund give the provinces both loans and grants; the federal Minister of Finance has kept only the loans.

That is what we regret. Had the Minister of Finance followed all the suggestions of the present premier of Quebec, we would not have to deal only with loans, borrowing and mortgages in connection with the provinces. It must not be forgotten that the sum of \$150 million will be used in so far as the province of Quebec is able to borrow and municipalities and other organizations keep on running into debt.

• (5:00 p.m.)

I wonder where we will end up with all those debts, and whether we are not doing the provinces a disservice by allowing them to double their debt without ever getting direct help that does not lead to debt.

But, what can be done? Our present financial system is made for debts, and must make the best of it. After collecting about \$13 billion in taxes from the people, the federal government asks the provinces to go into debt for it. The minister proposes as a third measure, and I quote:

—it is intended to allocate a further sum of \$23 million to departments and agencies to undertake further capital improvements in regions where unemployment is most severe.

When considering that \$23 million are divided among the various departments, I immediately think of the Department of Agriculture. Indeed, I am anxious to see what will be the amount allotted to that department especially in Quebec, because the budget does not propose any measure to promote agriculture in that province. I trust that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) will take into account the different letters he receives and that he will take the necessary steps, in order to stimulate Quebec agriculture.

I am anxious to see what steps will be taken, because I would like some of those credits to be affected to farming in my area where 75 per cent of the people are connected with farming and need some help comparable with that received in other areas. Our district has experienced some disasters and I hope that the Minister of Agriculture will let us know the amount that the Minister of Finance wants to give the department of Agriculture and the sum that will be forthcoming for our regions.

The minister also stated as follows:

A further \$20 million will be allocated to development of roads.

It is no use hoping to get any thing for our regions. It is for Montreal. This sum of \$20 million will be spent on the development of the new airport and will not alleviate in any way unemployment in our region.

As the minister stated, the purpose of this budget is to stimulate the Canadian economy and alleviate unemployment. Of course, the big problem today is unemployment. But what causes this unemployment? First of all, the