

The Address—Mr. Stanfield

Negotiations were under way last January. The unions made their submission. But the government failed to make any money offer to its employees in the Post Office Department until six weeks after the unions had taken their strike vote. This was an incitement to strike. What kind of irresponsibility is this? What kind of example is this to set for other employees? The Montpetit report two years ago detailed shocking conditions and low morale in the Post Office Department, but the government was callous in its reluctance to press for the implementation of that report's recommendations.

So the government let the strike happen. Eventually a settlement was reached. Who says it could not have been reached without a strike? Who knows? The government never tried. Apparently the government was indifferent to the cost to the country, to the small businessman, to the disruption to the public, to the inconvenience to the public through the loss of an essential public service.

The government adopted the same casual approach to the grain handlers' strike which started in mid-July. In August Mr. Tysoe was appointed as mediator. He gave up finally, saying both sides were too inflexible. Then he went back to try to effect a settlement. In the meantime wheat troubles were deepening daily. After 54 days the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) called the parties together. If ever there was a situation calling for prompt and effective action, with vast amounts of wheat in storage and Canada's percentage of the world wheat market slipping, this was it.

I watched the Prime Minister saying in Winnipeg, "Yes, we have done a poor job selling wheat in the past but we are going to do better." They have made a fine start, Mr. Speaker, allowing the strike to continue for 54 days, with the performance of our wheat contracts being endangered and difficulties mounting in regard to making any new commitments to sell additional wheat. There was a back-up of millions of bushels of wheat in the hands of the farmers. At a time when a large, new wheat crop was expected there was every urgency, every reason to act, but the government let the situation ride. The Prime Minister said, "I am watching it." At about day 50 of the strike the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) said, "I think the employers are more responsible for this than the employees." The Minister of Labour finally did something and achieved a settlement.

Consider what this delay has cost our farmers. We in this party have grave concern

[Mr. Stanfield.]

about all the farmers in Canada, especially the western wheat growers. Others on this side of the house will have something more to say about this matter but I want now to condemn the government as forcefully as I can for its failure to accept and discharge its responsibility in connection with this matter.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: One of the main reasons for labour unrest is the runaway inflation we have had for a number of years under Liberal governments. Since this government took office we have seen its failure, through its casualness, to convince the people of Canada of its determination to deal with this question. In addition we have had mounting unemployment which is creating hardship and further uneasiness among our working people.

When you turn to the Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, you get another lecture on productivity. Well, we received a number of lectures from the former minister of finance. I myself have emphasized—we all have—the importance of economic growth. The Economic Council of Canada has emphasized it. But the hard fact is that Canada under this government has been falling far short of its goal of economic growth for the past three years and if this continues, Mr. Speaker, far from having a just society we are going to have a stagnant society. Certainly economic growth is a basic, central challenge to the government, growth to produce the number of jobs required, and if we do not achieve this growth then all bets are off so far as the achievement of a just or any other kind of satisfactory society is concerned.

The Economic Council of Canada has pointed out that we need an annual rate of growth of 5.5 per cent in order to develop the number of jobs required for young and new Canadians entering our work force. Since the spring of 1966 the economic growth rate has been between 2 per cent and 3 per cent, although it is a shade better at the moment. As a result we have increasing unemployment. In 1967 unemployment was at an annual rate of 4.1 per cent. This year the rate is 5.3 per cent, and of course it is much higher in some parts of the country. A total of 419,000 Canadians are out of work.

Surely this is a matter of urgency to government, particularly where older workers are concerned, particularly for younger workers without skills, and also for young students who hoped to make enough money this summer to be able to continue their education and who are now faced this fall with very