

The Budget—Mr. A. Lambert

Mr. Speaker, I do admit that my proposal was rejected by the committee but only because of the interpretation given to the Standing Orders of the House, which will have to be amended to ensure greater flexibility and efficiency in the committees.

Mr. Speaker, I would like now to say quite frankly, having worked a few months on the committees, what I think of their efficiency, so that we may find ways and means to improve them and so that Parliament might benefit therefrom.

Mr. Speaker, the government has greatly publicized the important part entrusted to the standing committees of the House. There was a time when I myself sincerely believed that hon. members would accomplish something worthwhile with this tool. But frankly I must admit that I am very disappointed at the lack of consideration given by the government to committee reports.

I am on the Committee on Agriculture which has a membership of 30. This committee has been authorized by the House to travel across the country to study farm problems on site.

The committee took two trips in 1969: one out west, the other in the east, but the report has not yet been tabled in the House. However, we visited a great number of regions, met hundreds of farmers and received numerous and interesting briefs which have not been of much use so far, so it seems.

This has brought me to ask myself certain questions. I am dumbfounded by the awful lack of logic I have witnessed in certain fields across the country.

In Newfoundland they had undertaken a fantastic project: the setting up of grazing-ground in a place where the Creator did not even want a single shrub to grow. It was intended to promote cattle breeding whereas at the same time in other parts of Canada entire farms are being deserted. There are thousands of such cases in Quebec and even in Ontario. And the government is prepared to give more than a \$100 million to the farmers in western Canada to get them to put thousands of acres of very fertile land in fallow. Don't you think that we are living in an upside down world?

● (5:00 p.m.)

That is not all. In 1968, under a cost sharing program, ARDA spent several million dollars in the Bellechasse, Lévis and Lotbinière ridings in the province of Quebec for drain-

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

age purposes. Governments boast about reclaiming 80,000 acres of land to bring them into cultivation; on the other hand, every possible attempt is made to turn into productive land areas which are unsuited for cultivation; furthermore, production is impeded in those already under cultivation. This is what happens in Canada in 1969-70, which is utterly ridiculous.

Soon the government will announce a new dairy policy for 1970-71 without first allowing the House to study the report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture which was tabled February 17 last. Mr. Speaker, the committee held several meetings, heard many interesting and capable witnesses, received very responsible briefs containing very sound proposals, with a view to finding a solution to the problem. In my opinion, all that amounted to nothing. That is why I have doubts about the usefulness of committees. Is their only purpose to send their members on trips?

Mr. Speaker, I should like now to deal with another subject of concern to my constituency, the textile industry. This week, I was supposed to meet with the manager of a plant which has developed to some extent and employs a great number of workers, but is going through a very serious crisis at present.

The textile industry is in a bad way. Indeed, a large number of workers feel insecure as a result of seasonal and chronic unemployment and low salaries. It is imperative that steps be taken to enable those mills to produce under human conditions, and to survive in the best interests of the area concerned and the country as a whole.

There was no mention made of that problem in the budget speech; that concerns and disappoints me. In answer to a question I put to him earlier this week, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) asked the opposition to make suggestions.

If he takes our suggestions into account in the same way as the Minister of Agriculture seems to take into account the briefs and recommendations of farm organizations concerning the dairy industry, I wonder whether he is serious when making such a request.

Unemployment increases from week to week, and the government seems happy about it. If, in order to fight inflation, more people have to be unhappy, I am against it. I represent a constituency located in a designated area, a special region, where the government must help industrial development in order to create more jobs. Now, not later than yesterday, 80 workers were laid off in one single