

In this country unemployment is higher than last year; 20,000 more people are unemployed than at the same time last year. At present 164,000 married men are without work, 18,000 more than last year. This is serious. Those in their most productive years, between 20 and 60, form one of our largest groups of unemployed. In that group 300,000 people are unemployed. That is serious. Those who have been unemployed for more than three months now number almost 100,000. That is very serious.

I wish to talk about the Atlantic provinces now. The labour force in the Atlantic provinces declined by about 5 per cent, yet unemployment has risen by 3,000. That represents a total loss of 8,000 jobs over last year. Figures for Ontario, Quebec, and other parts of Canada have already been quoted. It is clear that the policies of the present government have not succeeded in removing regional disparities. Instead, they have accentuated them. Many of us recall the bright words of hope uttered by the Prime Minister in the Atlantic provinces during the election campaign. He promised us a Marshall plan. We do not know what that plan is. I suppose we shall have to wait until the minister responsible for regional development tells us about it. We wish to see policies introduced that will bring our employment levels up to those enjoyed by the rest of Canada and our income levels up to those enjoyed by provinces like Ontario, British Columbia and some others.

I have already dealt with subsidies for vessels. Since the subsidy for the construction of wooden fishing vessels was discontinued the Atlantic region has suffered from greatly increasing unemployment. The government should have maintained subsidies of between 35 and 50 per cent on the cost of constructing wooden fishing vessels. The government's action has seriously crippled our maritime shipping industry. I hope the government will implement policies that will help shipbuilding in Canada generally and in the Atlantic region in particular. I think the Minister of Fisheries (Mr. Davis) probably would agree that such subsidies are a good idea and would help the fishing industry. It could well be said that this government has presided over the liquidation of the Atlantic fishing industry. Certainly the closing of the Newfoundland outports has been a serious blow leading to the liquidation of a way of life going back 300 years.

Another point I wish to raise, which was dealt with by the hon. member for Joliette

Alleged Failure to Reduce Unemployment
(Mr. La Salle), is that the government has adopted policies which have led to eastern Canadian farmers being driven off their lands and into the welfare offices of the cities. Although the government has been told repeatedly of the plight of our farmers its reaction has been that there is no problem. The government's actions in this field have led to large-scale unemployment.

• (5:30 p.m.)

The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has set up regional desks to deal with regional problems and to keep him fully informed. Not long ago a Toronto member was reported as saying, with reference to these regional desks, that Liberal members of parliament now might as well stay home, smoke their cigarettes—unless these have been banned in the meantime by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro)—put their feet up on their desks and draw their salaries because these people manning the regional desks would be telling the Prime Minister what to do in the various areas. One can only conclude that it is time to clear out some of these desks because apparently the people behind them are not telling the Prime Minister the facts, or he is not interested.

The government is cannibalizing the Canadian economy to further abstract schemes which have failed to produce any benefits whatsoever. The government, by its vast, unco-ordinated expenditures is battenning on the economy like a giant parasite, taking far more out than it is putting in. Where are the programs of national development? Where is the blueprint for expanding our efforts in the north?

We have been presented with minor programs and projects which cannot even be dignified by the name of policy. Other than that we have had an attitude of hands-off aloofness, a kind of non-policy, a sort of political Fen, which allows the nation to drift while the Prime Minister and his colleagues drift and dream. Drifting and dreaming is their theme song.

A government which in six months has failed to acknowledge much less deal with high interest rates, high taxes, growing inflation and increasing unemployment, cannot be said to have a grasp of the country's problems. As I see it the whole situation can be put in a nutshell. This government, on matters of domestic interest and domestic necessity, just has not done its homework. It has given agriculture no hope. It has given the