

do we allow inflation to run unchecked, eroding the buying power of millions of families that have to provide shelter, food and clothing for themselves and their children?

● (1510)

I was intrigued by the statement of the hon. member for Sherbrooke that the United States had spent huge sums of money, but had failed to eliminate poverty from that country. I wonder what the hon. member thinks his colleagues on that side of the House have been doing for the past six years. We all know they have been spending money as if it were going out of style. And I will tell the hon. members across the floor that they have failed, utterly and completely, to eliminate poverty from this country. They have failed to eliminate regional disparities, and they have failed to provide jobs for the people in our country who want to work. What they have succeeded in doing has been to destroy the work ethic, divide our country into regional blocs, and to destroy the efficiency of the public service.

I suggest to members across the floor that they might as well not close and lock the door to the public treasury. The cupboard must be pretty bare by now. Right now the government is spending money that we do not have, and that leads me to believe that there is not any more left in the treasury. Last year, for instance, the gross public debt was \$51.8 billion and the net national debt represented about \$1,000 for every man, woman and child in Canada. I do not know yet what it is for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1974, but it must be in the area of \$55 billion. We do know from the estimates, though, that it will cost \$2.9 billions this year just to service the national debt. That is money we cannot spend on services or benefits because, in effect, it has already been spent. This is money down the drain. That takes care of Shangri La and Utopia, Mr. Speaker. It is a very sad awakening, but it is reality, and I say to the government members, and especially to the cabinet members who are squandering our money, stop building castles in the sky; stop living in a dream world and come down here and face reality.

The problems we had when the present government took over are still with us. In fact, they are even worse now, and there are some new ones. There are new problems that have resulted from over-spending, inefficiency and just plain bungling. Those problems will not just disappear. They must be dealt with. But first, Mr. Speaker, the government will have to face up squarely to those problems, instead of trying to smother them with borrowed money.

I see that, according to the estimates, the government intends to create a few more agencies and corporations, possibly even some departments. This is scandalous, Mr. Speaker, but I have to admit that it is typical of the way the present government operates. If a department or agency is not able to cope with a given situation, create a new agency alongside the old, and transfer the responsibilities to the new one. Then you have two or three agencies fumbling with the same problems. We have more agencies and departments in our government than any other country in the western world and more cabinet ministers. We have more ministers in our federal cabinet than either the United States or Great Britain, and yet we

do not seem to be able to get a clear answer from the cabinet on even the most simple and clear-cut issues.

There are 47 members of the government caucus who are either ministers or parliamentary secretaries, almost 50 per cent of the entire caucus. I can't help thinking there must be an awful lot of jockeying over there for positions of power, and the authority to spend those billions of dollars in the estimates. It is easy to understand why they seem to have so much trouble making decisions on even the most vital issues facing the country. It is abundantly clear by now that whatever it is they are doing, they are doing very much for the Canadian people. It is time they started looking after the business of running the country. The present government has more than doubled the national budget in only six years, and I do not think it is too much to expect the government to start showing some results for all that money.

The Unemployment Insurance Commission is in a scandalous mess and, in fact, the whole system of social services in Canada today is in a mess. Who would have imagined just six years ago that the cost of the UIC would rise to more than \$2 billion by the year 1973? And that seems to be only the beginning. UIC is already showing signs of surpassing that figure in the coming year, and still the government refuses to undertake a full inquiry of the program, and of the department that is administering the program. This is a very vital program, Mr. Speaker. It was designed to provide assistance to people in the work force who, for a variety of reasons, might find themselves unemployed. Every member of this House accepts the UIC, and the concept behind it, as a responsibility of the government. It is not the UIC to which we in the official opposition are objecting. It is the administration that we quarrel with, and for very good reasons.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) has called for an inquiry into the operation of the UIC, stating that the agency has been operating under a cloud of suspicion for a very long time, and that it is time to clear the air. I agree with that wholeheartedly, and I would add that if we undertake an investigation into the administration of UIC, a lot of heads will roll. It should be obvious to anyone that a large percentage of the two billion dollars spent last year on UIC went to sources other than the legitimate claimants who had paid premiums into the program. An overhaul of UIC would give us an opportunity to do something else very important. It would allow us to restructure the whole manpower-UIC set-up. We would be able to develop programs whereby people could be trained for the jobs that exist, jobs that cannot presently be filled from the labour pool. Advances in technology have passed tens of thousands of people by, leaving them in a situation where they would like to work but cannot qualify for the jobs that are offered them.

I get letters from leaders in industry pointing out difficulties faced by employers in filling job vacancies. Many industries just cannot afford to train prospective employees. In many other cases people are trained for jobs and, after they have worked for the minimum period required to qualify for UIC benefits, they contrive to get themselves fired or just quit, forcing the employer to go through the training process all over again. Other employers have told me that people who are receiving unemploy-