

Anti-Inflation Policies

could not be serious when he made that statement. This is the third time in three months that the opposition parties have dedicated opposition days to matters related to the stubborn insistence of the government upon economic policies which are inappropriate and wrong. We have also devoted time to putting forward resolutions against the determination of the architects of the just society to put Canadians out of work.

There are, of course, other great issues in the country. There are other areas where the government is failing and deserves to be censured. But at the root of most of these other problems is the single fact that the government is so preoccupied with its own plans that it does not respond to the realities of the hardships in this country, and it gives the continuing impression that it does not care about them.

Under this government Ottawa has become a sort of separate principality, cut off from the real problems Canadians face and increasingly incapable of finding a solution to these problems. There is no better symbol of that detachment from reality than the cold and brutal insistence of this government on creating unemployment. If one needs a symbol of the differences between the parties in this House, that symbol is to be found in the stone-cold response of this government to the human problems of fear, misery and self-contempt that come with unemployment.

I suggest it would be instructive to have the Prime Minister trade places for a day with the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan). Certainly, it would be refreshing for the country to be presided over, even for a day, by the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate. But the real test would be to see whether the Prime Minister, with the roles reversed, could remain so insensitive to the human side of unemployment if he had to answer for a day directly to the unemployed of Gander-Twillingate or to the unemployed of any other region where the hardship of this government's harsh policies is concentrated. Perhaps under those circumstances the Prime Minister could explain to them the importance of their contribution as "regrettable side effects" of high national policy. That is the latest euphemism. If you are out of work you are "a regrettable side effect".

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: According to the last DBS figures, we have now in Canada some 542,000 "regrettable side effects", and as usual un-
[Mr. Stanfield.]

employment is most acute in the areas least able to stand it, the areas of slow growth. Across the country there are more unemployed than a year ago, but the number of employed in Ontario, British Columbia and, by a small margin, in the Prairies, was a little higher than a year ago, although the number of unemployed was greater. However, in the Atlantic provinces for two successive months the number of employed has been actually less than a year ago. That is true in Quebec as well, at least according to the last report.

• (3:00 p.m.)

The only reason the unemployment figure is not substantially higher in the Atlantic provinces than a year ago as a result of the even lower number of people employed is that the work force, according to DBS, has shrunk, indicating that a large number of people in the Atlantic provinces has actually given up hope. They are no longer applying for work. No doubt the government will come up with some ingenious explanation of these figures, some way to show that they aren't really there, perhaps by a comparison with the unemployment situation in Bombay or Calcutta. Perhaps the government will try to play games with the unemployment figures, as the Prime Minister did the other day, using some seasonally adjusted manipulation with respect to October when he tried to show that the employment situation was better in the Atlantic provinces, and consequently that the government's anti-inflation policies could not be having the detrimental effect in areas of slow growth that members of the opposition had been saying they were having. It is this kind of manipulation that has put statistical discussions into disrepute.

You must remember, Mr. Speaker, that this government has had a difficult time with figures. The most recent manipulation of figures under the auspices of the government party was so misleading that even the leader of the Liberal party in Quebec dismissed it as "inopportune, awkward and unjustified." Some of his associates were even less restrained. One aide is quoted as saying "The Feds are maniacs". Of course, everyone in this House can remember the earlier difficulties this government had with simple figures. Of all the troubles the government has had, one of the most basic seems to be that it just cannot count. Some of us would argue that a more serious problem is its refusal to recognize that these unemployment figures stand for people and