

*The Budget—Mr. Nystrom*

• (8:10 p.m.)

The budget debate and the Speech from the Throne give members of Parliament an opportunity to ask important questions about the direction in which Canada is going. They give us a chance to look at our place in society, assess our values and decide our role in the world community as well as the closer question of the role of Parliament itself.

I came across many answers to these important questions whilst travelling throughout Saskatchewan during the last few weeks. People are frustrated with the way things are going in Canada, particularly on the problems of unemployment and poverty, and farmers who are being asked to take wheatland out of production are incensed.

Looking around the world we see that humanity has the potential to destroy itself through nuclear weapons, through pollution or even through overpopulation. We live in a world guided by international anarchy. More and more people are being alienated from the institution of Parliament. They are dissatisfied with its performance and are looking for alternatives.

I should like to deal with a number of things which I mentioned at the outset, Mr. Speaker. Firstly, people from all regions of this country should have a greater opportunity to derive the benefits of citizenship. Instead of waging war on poverty, the government is waging war on the poor. In their fight against inflation they have created unemployment, raised interest rates and have generally made things more difficult for the poor people and many average citizens of this country. Unemployment is now higher than it has been for a number of years. The figures for March show that 6.7 per cent of the Canadian work force is unemployed, representing 542,000 men and women. Many of these people have families to support, making this a very serious problem. I should like to compare the year 1967 with 1970. In March, 1967, 5.3 per cent of the work force was unemployed whilst today the figure is 6.7 per cent, a substantial increase.

The regional unemployment picture shows that in the Maritimes in 1967 unemployment was 10.6 per cent, and today the figure is 10.8 per cent. The 1967 figure for the province of Quebec was 7.2 per cent, and today it is 9.2 per cent. These figures may indicate one of the reasons why many people in Quebec are frustrated with the federal system and the type of programs offered to them. Even in industrialized Ontario the 1967 unemployment figure was 3.9 per cent, and today it is 4.6 per

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cent. In the Prairie provinces the figures show the region to be severely affected. In 1967 only 2.7 per cent of the work force was unemployed, but today the figure is 5.2 per cent.

Just the other day in this House the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was telling us that unemployment was not too severe. He used some seasonally adjusted figures to show that unemployment had decreased in some areas. But in March, 1967, the seasonally adjusted unemployment figure was 3.9 per cent of the work force of Canada, and last month, March, it was 5.1 per cent. This is a serious increase.

Considered in terms of the actual number of people out of work, the situation becomes rather startling. In the province of Quebec in October, 1969, 135,000 people were unemployed. In December the figure increased to 152,000 people and on March 21, 1970, the total was 206,000 people unemployed. When we break down the unemployment figure to see who is being affected, we find that unemployment is higher among people between the ages of 14 and 24 years of age. Out of a total of 540,000 unemployed, 216,000 people are between the ages of 14 and 24.

This clearly points out that the retraining facilities, the schools and the programs offered to people in this age group are not adequate. We must remember, too, that many in this group will drop out and not be seeking employment after a year or so, having gravitated to one of the subcultures prevalent in city life and thus not calculated in the statistics. Another factor is that in the month of April tens of thousands of university students and some graduate students will be seeking summer employment. They will face difficulties, particularly in the Maritime provinces, rural Quebec, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, because of the agricultural recession, unless they are willing to go outside their own province.

Another grave factor that we must face up to soon is the whole question of poverty in the country. This has been pointed out clearly and vividly by the Economic Council of Canada, which stated that 20 per cent of the population is living in poverty and another 20 per cent is living on the edge of poverty or at a subsistence level. What does this mean to the country, Mr. Speaker? First of all, it means lack of opportunity for better education and a better life. Poverty has many social and psychological effects and society is deprived of the contribution that could be made by these people if they were in better circumstances.