

The Budget—Mr. Asselin

Mr. Asselin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am eager to hear the speech of the Postmaster General. He thinks perhaps that his whispering will make me to lose the thread of my ideas. In this field I am more experienced than he and the more he will interrupt me, the more categorically I shall answer his questions.

What is the objective of regional economic expansion if not to save important industries that already exist? That is the main objective of regional economic expansion. We have to save what is already existing and to strengthen the financial structures of industries which are now experiencing some difficulty to survive, as the pulp and paper industry.

As a result of the disastrous unemployment which has reached a record high of 10.4 per cent in Quebec for 30 years, the government should be realistic and dynamic, qualities which it has been sadly lacking since it came into power.

The 543,000 unemployed Canadians and their families demand that the government correct that disastrous situation. The unemployed join other Canadians in asking the government to undertake a truly planned development of our economy. People want to know the long-term and short-term economic goals of the government. If those goals differ from those set 5 years ago by the Economic Council of Canada, it should say so. The government must have the courage to say clearly that they accept easily an unemployment rate of over 5 per cent, even though the Economic Council has already set the critical point at 3 per cent.

The government must stop trying to justify its failures in the fight against ever-increasing costs through imaginary efforts against unemployment. This government must stop trying to hide its incompetence in the fight against unemployment through the still fruitless pursuit of other economic objectives.

The government should have determinedly proposed a budget of full employment; unfortunately, they only took, as usual, symbolical steps in that direction. They brought down a budget stamped with timidity, trying to satisfy everyone a little, with band-aids.

Several other examples will help prove the lack of views of the present government. It is a well-known fact that specialized and new labour has increased at an extraordinary rate in Canada in the last few years.

This government has certainly forgotten about this ever-growing labour force, since according to the latest figures of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics 270,000 young people aged 14 to 24 were unemployed last May.

An ever more recent example has indicated that once again, the government is always late in action and without any real planning. The program aimed at creating summer jobs for students was designed during the last months, without real consideration for the importance of student manpower.

The meagre amount of \$15 million which had been provided had to be supplemented with another \$10 million. These \$25 million will only provide jobs for 30,000 young people when at least 150,000 jobs should have been

[The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel).]

created in order to meet the requirements of the student manpower.

Mr. Speaker, the lack of realism, imagination and planning is indeed the major characteristic of this government, whether at the economic policy level or any other.

We could make an impressive list of the measures which the government should have proposed in its budget statement.

Obviously we would have liked to say a word on the Victoria federal-provincial conference but unfortunately I am unable to do so in the time at my disposal. However I hope we will have some time later to discuss it more thoroughly as it is not possible today to know where we stand. But I hope that the Canadian government will stop serving ultimatums to the provinces and provincial premiers who meet at federal-provincial conferences. If we want to build a united Canada, that period of confrontation between the federal government and the provinces must come to an end and soon. Even if Quebec has rejected the Victoria charter, I hope that the Prime Minister and his cabinet will re-open negotiations instead of saying that, if one province rejects the Victoria charter, constitutional discussions will be over for a long time.

Obviously, it will be said that Canadians, and especially Quebecers, are not much interested in constitutional problems. It should be realized however that, because of some economic and social weaknesses, a new federalism and a new structure for it are essential to attract French Canadians to it. And I suggest that the Prime Minister and the federal cabinet should stop issuing ultimatums to settle constitutional problems. That is not the way to solve such serious problems which involve the future of every Canadian.

In conclusion, I hope that the Prime Minister will re-open negotiations on the constitutional issue so that a new constitution and a new federalism may improve the condition of all Canadians and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member but the time allotted to him has now expired.

[English]

Mr. Steven Otto (York East): Mr. Speaker, at this late stage in the debate I do not intend to keep any more laurels on that poor, bald head and bent frame of the minister than he has already received, although I do want to say that the budget was a good one. I want to add two views that I take of the budget and of the minister. First, I think this budget, and the ideas of the minister put forward in it, denote a break from the advice of public servants. I have a feeling that Bryce, Rasminsky, and Reisman have not had as much to do with this budget as the minister himself, the caucus, the members, and indeed with the participation of the business community, of labour and so on. I think that is a very good thing. Second, I would say that, if I see the budget correctly, it is the first indication that he as minister will no longer consider unemployment as something that is absolutely necessary to curb inflation. I think we have seen the end of those days. From the look