

this government has obstinately refused to widen immediate benefits, and this in spite of the fact that in December, 1970, the surplus in the unemployment insurance fund was almost \$475 million. That, I think, shows something of the concern of this government.

Of course, one must admit that there is something in the rhetoric of the government when it speaks of the just society and participatory democracy. Certainly no other concept has come so close to distributing unemployment impartially among all classes of our society. Blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, professional men and women, the skilled and the unskilled alike are experiencing the results of this government's mismanagement. There is no way of ascertaining the number of persons forced into the poverty category as a result of long-term unemployment. The OECD has found that turnover among long-term unemployed is extremely low and that few families in the low-income bracket have accumulated the resources necessary to withstand prolonged jobless periods. It is surely obvious, even to this government, that many thousands of Canadians have been impoverished as a direct result of policies that right now mean that 200,000 men and women have been out of work for four months or longer.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Mr. Stanfield: And what about the young people? One out of seven is unemployed right now. That is the result of present and past policies. Where is the hope for the young people who will be pouring onto the labour market this spring? Certainly it is not in the policies of this government, Mr. Speaker. Even while it refuses to behave as if it believes the situation is serious, this government is trying its utmost to apportion blame to people other than itself. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) stated, as reported at page 2544 of *Hansard*:

• (8:40 p.m.)

During 1970 as a whole, unemployment in Canada averaged 5.9 per cent compared to 4.7 per cent in 1969. An important factor which contributed to this increase was the continued rise in the number of Canadians put out of work because of industrial disputes.

This excerpt from the minister's speech during the budget debate is another example of the government's hypocrisy in laying the blame for the results of its own policies on the backs of others.

Mr. Benson: It is not true.

Mr. Stanfield: It is not warranted by the facts.

Mr. Benson: It is not true.

Mr. Stanfield: The preliminary figures for 1970 indicate that the number of man-days lost through industrial disputes was less than in 1969. In 1969, more than eight million man-days were lost. In 1970, the figure was slightly less; there was a drop of more than 3 per cent.

Mr. Benson: It is not true.

The Budget—Mr. Stanfield

Mr. Stanfield: The minister keeps saying: "It is not true".

Mr. Benson: What is the source?

Mr. Baldwin: Give the seasonally adjusted figures.

Mr. Stanfield: When we compare this figure with the number of man-days lost through unemployment, which amounts to 124 million, we can see even more clearly the real extent to which strikes and other disputes were involved in the rise in mass unemployment. No one minimizes the serious nature of labour disputes to those involved and to the economy generally. However, for the minister to play his "blame game" with this factor, and to magnify it beyond what the facts will support, is surely another reason to wonder about the honesty of this government in its statements of economic policy.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stanfield: In other words, the minister's whole argument concerning the effect of strikes on mass unemployment belongs in the limbo of lame excuses made by a government that is bankrupt of policies and ideas, a government that has nothing to offer but blame for others and self-satisfaction as it continues to gamble that the economic cycle will not betray it. The Canadian people are fed up with a government that gambles with the health of the economy and the dignity of the individual.

The response of this government has been cool; I will certainly admit that. According to the *Globe and Mail* of February 10, the Minister of Finance suggested to the provinces that they could borrow if they wanted to do anything more about unemployment. That is cool; in fact, it is cold comfort indeed. The government has had warnings. It has had suggestions from many sources. Four our part, we have pleaded for the abolition of the three per cent surtax, corporate and personal, which is supposed to be dispensed with in any event. We have asked for a further reduction in personal income tax. We have demanded a reduction in the 11 per cent sales tax on construction materials. We have done this because we believe such tax cuts would stimulate the economy. That is what is needed today.

We have asked the government to present a realistic tax reform package and thus reduce uncertainty in the economy. We have demanded that someone, anyone in the government be appointed to take charge of the fight against recession and mass unemployment. As an immediate measure for this winter we have suggested that unemployment insurance benefits be widened to cover many Canadians who are not presently covered or whose benefits may have run out. These are some of our suggestions. Other parties and groups have made other suggestions. I must admit that the government has been consistent: let us give them credit for that. They have turned a deaf ear to all our pleas and to the pleas of all sections of the Canadian people. In the face of a situation that has deteriorated from month to month, week to week and day to day, that has been their response. It is a response that the Canadian people can no longer accept