

The Budget—Mr. Joe Clark

I have only a minute or two left, but I wanted also to speak about small businesses and ways of financing them. I have discussed this several times in the past, both in the House and in committee. It is a complex subject, but a solution must be found as soon as possible. The following is a direct quotation from the Speech from the Throne:

—aid to small businesses through new initiatives to strengthen management and consulting services and to improve access to financing facilities.

I believe this is what small and medium-sized businesses mainly need, although I do not mean to minimize the importance of new measures to improve management and consulting services, which would be new sources of working and investment capital which these businesses badly need in order to broaden their operations.

• (1710)

[*English*]

Mr. Joe Clark (Rocky Mountain): Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege for me to rise in this House. This is virtually my first chance to speak in the House of Commons, although I have had the opportunity to ask one or two questions even though I am not a parliamentary secretary. I have also had the opportunity once to speak briefly in the late show at a time when the House was slightly less full than it is now, if that could be imagined.

When one takes his place in this chamber it is with some feeling of trepidation. One cannot help but be aware of the traditions of this chamber, and one cannot help either but be aware that this is one of the few institutions in the country that is capable of drawing together citizens from across a wide and varied land. I just wanted to note in passing how appropriate it seemed to me the other day to hear the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) talking about dinosaurs. That is obviously a subject of natural interest to his party. Indeed, it is difficult to think of any other group in this House which has a greater philosophic affinity to that era, or a better prospect of becoming extinct.

It is a remarkable coincidence that whenever the leadership of the NDP encounters a crisis of conscience at home, they suddenly perceive some greater evil at another hand. Faced with the challenge of principle embodied in the Waffle, their leadership conjured up the corporate bum, whom they have now embraced. And now, caught in an alliance which they consider a lesser treachery than electoral defeat, their leadership has decided that we are dinosaurs. They remind me of the itinerant evangelists we used to get, from time to time, in the towns on the Prairies. They would come in the night, usually having just created their own theology, and proceed to bilk the wealthy widows of the town with promises either of a new cathedral or a new Jerusalem, and when suspicion grew about their purposes, they would suddenly be seized of the great dangers of fluoridation, or Argentina, or some other scare. They usually lasted about five months, these prophets of phony fear, and then were never heard of again. So, in every particular, they remind one of the NDP.

On February 15, I asked the Prime Minister what plans his government had to find jobs for young Canadians. He replied with characteristic boldness and foresight and said his plan was to wait for the budget. Now, we have the

[Mr. Clermont.]

budget and presumably the government's answer—which is that it intends to do nothing at all to break the pattern which has made Canadians under 24 the chief victims of unemployment in Canada throughout the life of the Trudeau government.

The most recent figures for January this year, indicate that a total of 688,000 Canadians were unemployed. Fully 300,000 of those were under the age of 24—almost half of the total number of unemployed in the country and one in nine of the people in that age group who wanted to work. That figure is appalling enough on its own. What is worse is that it is part of a clear and evident pattern that even the government has recognized. The proportion of unemployed in that age group has been rising gradually for several years. But in recent years it has been nearly 45 per cent of the total, despite the fact that many people of that age who might have been looking for work have been drained off into technical schools or CEGEPS, or colleges and universities. There is some indication now that this safety valve is closing, because young people who go into training for better jobs are finding too often that they graduate into unemployment. The result of their diversion is just that they have better skills to waste.

That pattern has been clear throughout the life of this ministry. They were warned by the Economic Council of Canada. They were warned by the Canadian Council on Social Development, by the Committee on Youth of their own Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner), and frequently by editorialists and by spokesmen of this party. Their only answer has been to fake a response. They claim that Opportunities for Youth was created to meet this problem. But Opportunities for Youth last year employed about 3,000 non-students for the summer. If applied today to the January figures, that would amount to the stirring figure of one per cent—a one per cent response—except that OFY does not work in the winter. That is about the only thing that program has in common with the young people it is supposed to help.

The government's only other response to unemployment in Canada, the LIP program, works less well among the young than among other age groups of the unemployed. In 1971-72, 41 per cent of LIP workers were under age 24 but 46 per cent to 47 per cent of the unemployed were under that age. In hard figures, LIP that year created only 37,000 temporary jobs for Canadians under 24 and there are 300,000 out of work today.

The more serious fault of the LIP and OFY programs in relation to youth employment is that they provide the government with an excuse for doing nothing effective about the problem. LIP and OFY embody a potential for innovation and involvement which is as important now as it was when that principle was introduced into Canadian legislation in the ARDA program. They are important programs. But they are not youth employment programs. Yet every time the statistics are cited in this House which prove that this government's economic programs are victimizing the young, the government answers by pointing to LIP and OFY. The most innovative aspect of these programs is the use the government makes of them to avoid meeting their responsibility to young Canadians who want to work. In so far as youth employment is concerned, LIP and OFY have been used principally not