

more than any other group are affected by high unemployment levels were left out of the picture a week ago Monday night. Unemployment is the most crucial economic and social problem confronting us today, and yet this government does not seem to realize that.

Consumer spending is still weak. Canadians save more money per capita than anyone else. Surely that is an indication of the perception that Canadians have of their economic future. Perhaps hon. members on the other side of the House will say that I am spreading doom and gloom, as the hon. Minister of National Defence said. We on this side of the House are telling it as it is. There is no purpose served in glossing things over and saying the rainbow is just over the mountain. That is quite true, but how high is the mountain, and how far away is it? We on this side of the House are telling it as it is and being accused of spreading doom and gloom. I am far from being a pessimist, but if this government remains in power much longer, Canada will be certainly heading down the drain.

During his statement the Minister of Finance noted that the economic growth potential will not be achieved in 1978. This means Canada will have failed to achieve its growth potential for five straight years. This should not be the case, not in a country such as Canada, where the sheer magnitude of our resources and people demand that we should be one of the leading nations of the world.

It is my belief the government's wasteful and exorbitant spending habits have dragged this country into the economic abyss we now find ourselves in. The federal government now overspends per Canadian as much as they spent per Canadian in 1968. The Minister of Finance has predicted a \$10.9 billion budgetary deficit for the fiscal year 1979. Hon. members who sit on the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs realize that that amount is always added to by supplementary estimates which come in because of over-expenditures that have accumulated during the final part of the fiscal year. That \$10.9 billion amounts to an incredible \$462 for every Canadian. In the fiscal year 1968 total budgetary spending per Canadian was only \$488.

I was particularly impressed with the Minister of Finance's confession of wrongdoing on the part of the government. It is a true statement that confession is good for the soul. I should like to refer to a short excerpt from that confession which reads as follows:

We all came to expect too much of the economy. Governments increased their spending too quickly.

Those final words are fascinating, but what I find even more remarkable is that while the government painfully admits this, there is almost nothing in the budget to make a significant reduction in government spending. If there are no changes in personal or corporate income taxes, or in the federal sales tax imposed at the manufacturing level and built into many prices, it is because of the government's record spending and its reluctance or inability to curb such practice.

Confidence in Canada has sunk slowly in the past ten years. It must be revived. I suppose that is the revival the hon.

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Minister of National Defence spoke about for the future, which of course will follow the next election. I doubt that can be done by those who sit across the floor. How can they accomplish that when it is their deplorable spending habits which have compounded greatly the economic problems of the country? Their spending habits have increased the estimates for 1978-79 to four times the amount of the estimates of 1968-69, just ten years ago.

● (1742)

This country, Mr. Speaker, is in dire need of new policies and practices. This country needs a little spring cleaning. Possibly, a June spring cleaning is what we can look forward to. We need a little fresh air. Only then will the economy begin to recover.

The minister is talking about hot air. I am going to tell hon. members that the Liberal government has had this very problem over the past ten years, and even more so in recent years. This government has plunged this country into debt, and that cannot be excused. Canada's debt to the rest of the world stood at \$106 billion at the end of 1977, up 10.4 per cent from a year earlier. It is important to remember that the service to the debt must be paid by taxes which amount to \$894 per person employed during 1977, up from \$792 in 1976. The government budget tabled this spring indicates another increase of more than 10 per cent during 1978.

This government has had their chance to give this country what it needs, a budget to restore confidence. Instead we have half measures with an election twist. A budget should seek to reassure. What we have witnessed is a government that has exhausted itself and can no longer provide solutions to the country's economic ills.

I was pleased to hear, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Ouellet) speaking earlier today. I had the privilege, and have had the privilege for a number of years, of serving on the urban affairs committee. In fact, the committee met this morning to discuss the estimates of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. During the discussion, I was very interested to quiz the minister to find out how successful the CHIP program, the insulation program for the other eight provinces in Canada, was, and I was able to get the following information which may be of great interest to my colleagues on all sides of the House.

As most members are aware, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia have had a plan in effect for approximately a year and a half up to the present time. This plan was much more generous in that it was not taxable. The grant under the plan goes as high as \$500, and these are the figures and the applications that have been received by the ministry: In Prince Edward Island, of the 20,000 applications received 16,000 grants have been approved and the amount of \$5.5 million has been paid out. In Nova Scotia there have been 97,000 applications received of which 55,000 were approved and \$19.5 million paid out. In the eight other provinces there has been a total of only 20,435 applications received, of which 15,000 were approved and only \$3.3 million paid out.