

... The gravity of the regional situation led observers to anticipate that the year's second budget—

The one we are debating now.

—would recognize the need to bolster the regional economy and give it the impetus to move out of the trough in step with the nation.

And, as the analysis puts it so well:

This expectation did not, however, prove to be true...

You do not need any embellishment on that statement that, "This expectation did not, however, prove to be true." These are not my words. These are not rhetorical adjectives that the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion seems so sensitive about. They are the result of a carefully prepared analysis by an apolitical group having to do with the whole economic future of the Maritimes. It is because the budget we are now debating falls so far short of the national needs, and because the expectation that it would recognize the need to bolster and give impetus to the regional economy proved untrue that I, as a representative of the region, consider it my duty to suggest that the minister, to say the least, has been callous in the manner in which he has ignored the special needs of our part of the country.

It seems to me that there are four issues having to do with the general theme of unemployment and regional inequalities, and as I have a minute or two more I want to try to state them as briefly as possible. The first concerns the working poor and the socially assisted. I hope the House will forgive me if I discuss this with particular emphasis on New Brunswick. This is not meant to be a whining cry for money. Rather, I want to share with you a *cri du cœur* on behalf of those who are having a hard time of it this winter, and also regretfully for many, too many winters before this winter. Some of the statistics are known, as an editorial in Tuesday's *Moncton Times* reminds us. There are figures that in their stark brutality are almost unbelievable. I quote:

—55 per cent of Tracadie's population is receiving help and in the general region about 40 per cent is on welfare.

Parliament and the country must understand that thousands of our fellow citizens have a food allowance of 17 cents per meal, "whose chances of finding jobs in the heart of winter are nil, whose homes are windy shells." To continue the editorial:

One fact appears to emerge—that the traditional welfare system of providing a subsistence style of living, tied in with a minimum wage structure whose earnings are often less than welfare allowances, must be changed. It provides no incentive to work and the whole structure drives out the few who can acquire an education, leaving behind the few who would be supported anyway (the widows, the blind, the ill and the old) and those who because of lack of education cannot qualify for jobs much better than cutting wood and catching fish. Both of these are seasonal occupations and are subject to the vagaries of weather.

When several years ago a talented CBC producer, Richard Nielsen, incidentally a New Brunswicker by birth, tried in a sensitive and probing documentary to share some of the horror behind these mean facts, people castigated him for not showing pastoral New Brunswick basking in an August sun. I was profoundly saddened by the film and depressed by the public outcry against what

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it depicted. Instead of engendering a will to something, I am sorry to say that many people ran for cover. They put on blindfolds and said that that was not the New Brunswick they wanted to see. Mr. Speaker, I suggest that if this issue, and the statistics in support of this issue are unsolved, they threaten by their brutality not only the unity in my province but the very fabric of this country.

Many people in this age of insensitive technocracy resist blood and guts words. They shun compassion and concern as being unworthy of the lexicon of a modern industrial state. As the old hymn asks, "When comes the promised time—?" Many Canadians are asking this question today. Many are asking this question this winter. I suggest that we, in this Parliament, have no higher priority than to work to end this patent injustice which is the lot of far too many of our brothers.

This leads me to the constitutional conference which completed another chapter in its continuing serial. We are now to be treated to constitutional underpinning to the determination of governments to fight regional inequality. But, Mr. Speaker, the niceties of constitutional language will have a hollow ring if these phrases are not translated into action. It will be idle and insulting to agree upon phraseology which has no content.

The budget we are debating certainly shows no evidence that one of the senior ministers in this administration understands his obligation to provide more funds for education and help to back up provincial tax revenues. The party I support will join the government in a common attack upon problems which are too vital for rhetoric, and I suggest, too human for a trading of statistical analyses.

In the statement of conclusions issued on February 9 at the end of the third working session of the constitutional conference, paragraph No. 7 is of interest. It is entitled "Regional Disparities." The first ministers, which seems to be the latest cliché for premiers and Prime Minister, recalling their conclusion on the subject of regional disparities at the working session in September, said that the constitution should include a recognition of the importance of equality of opportunity for all Canadians. It was, therefore, concluded that the reduction of regional disparities should be referred to both in a new preamble and in the body of the constitution.

(a) The preamble should state that one objective of confederation is the social, economic, and cultural development, and the general welfare and equality of opportunity for all citizens in whatever region they may live; (b) In the body of the constitution there should be a statement of obligation on all governments, federal and provincial

(i) to promote equality of opportunity and well-being for all individuals;

(ii) to ensure, as nearly as possible, that essential public services of reasonable quality will be available to individual citizens.

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(iii) to promote economic development which will reduce disparities in the social and economic opportunities of individual Canadians in whatever region they may live.

This obligation would not be enforceable by the courts and would not have the effect of altering the distribution of legislative powers. If this statement, is to have