

The Budget—Mr. Marchand

measure of relief but we doubt that it will be soon enough. It becomes obvious, therefore, that if we wish to conquer poverty and to increase productivity we must strike first at illness.

We in this group have listened to the government's promises of a comprehensive, universal health scheme by July, 1967, but we have grown rather anxious about the absence of any apparent action to this end. We heard about it right up to last November 8, which I believe was election day, and there has been a very deep silence since that time. However, we would like to urge the government to move as swiftly as possible in this field because we feel it is essential for the welfare both of our people and our economy.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I wish to join with all those who have congratulated the Minister of Finance on his Budget speech. Before going any further, I just want to say two things on this subject.

I was particularly pleased to see that the small wage earners are to be exempt from the new tax which will be imposed shortly on the Canadian people as a whole. I was also happy to see that the concept of a compulsory reserve was introduced to exercise some control over investments. I think that formula deserves to be studied, amplified and developed.

But, most of all, this afternoon, I would like to talk about the financial aspect of a commission which has been very much discussed in Canada so far and about its immediate and future objectives. I am talking about the royal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism.

Many times in this house and in the newspapers there has been talk about the royal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism, not so much to discuss the objectives it is seeking, but mostly to try to discredit it a little by pointing out how much it costs, the money it is spending and the time it is taking to do its work.

Following a question asked here, it was said that the royal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism had cost \$4.5 million up to March 31, 1966. It was said that it was the most expensive commission in the history of confederation.

● (5:00 p.m.)

If we add to the amounts already spent those which will eventually be spent, since

the commission has not finished its work, it is possible that this figure will reach between \$4 and \$7 million.

There is no need to be scandalized by such heavy expenditures. Figures are always relative. Compared with billions of dollars, \$5 million is relative. That might not be enough if the work to do is more important than the money allocated for it. The contrary may also be true. It might be too much if the commission spends that money without any control or needlessly.

I think that it is from that standpoint that we must evaluate the commission's work and the huge amount of money which figures in the books of the Canadian government. Was that money spent usefully?

Is our purpose, the purpose of the government in instituting this commission, worthwhile and worth the amount of money we are investing in that great venture?

To my mind, Mr. Speaker, there is malice, if not meanness, in insinuating that this commission is costing more because the commissioners may be more greedy or unwise in the spending of public funds. I feel such a gratuitous statement is unfair to those who are struggling with a task of fundamental importance to the future of Canada.

It is a fact that the royal commission on bilingualism and biculturalism is costing more than the other commissions. It is the first commission to have ten commissioners; usually royal commissions have one, two or three commissioners. That is a first explanation.

The second reason is the way in which the commission decided to carry out its mandate; it leads to considerable expense. How does it lead to such expense? First, through the series of regional meetings held right across Canada and then, through its vast research program.

At the time when I was a member of that commission, most of the funds, that is almost three quarters and very often 90 per cent of the money allotted the commission went into research or the secretariat. Last year, according to our figures, the salaries paid the commissioners represented no more than 5 per cent of the funds allowed the commission to perform its work. All in all, when the work is done, I do not think the commissioners' salaries will exceed 10 per cent of the funds granted the commission.

Those facts have to be taken into account when considering the amounts paid to the commission. The real question is whether the commission was justified in calling regional