

*Speech from the Throne*

when the present administration took office in 1968. In fact, in many respects we are farther from the goal than ever before. I would like to deal more fully with several of the points I have raised to show that this administration's campaign slogan in 1968 of a just society certainly does not measure up to the expectations of most Canadians.

Let us look first at the tragic unemployment situation which we have in Canada. The latest available figures show that up to the middle of January there were 665,000 jobless Canadians. This is 7.7 per cent of the total labour force. The rate of unemployment in the Atlantic provinces stood at 12.9 per cent of the labour force. In the province of Quebec it was 9.8 per cent, and in British Columbia 8.7 per cent. The rate in Ontario and on the Prairies stood at 5.8 per cent. It all adds up to a national tragedy and is a clear indication of the totally inadequate economic programs and policies being followed by the present administration. It is a far cry from the goal of a job for all Canadians willing and able to work.

I would not be so critical of the present administration if our current unemployment problems had been of short duration, largely beyond the control of our federal administration. But this is not so. In 1970 this government deliberately implemented an economic policy aimed at creating mass unemployment. At the time the Prime Minister announced to the country that he was willing to tolerate a 6 per cent rate of unemployment in an effort to beat inflation. He was more than successful in forcing tens of thousands of Canadians out of work, and for several months in the latter part of 1970 inflation was held in check.

But what do we have today, Mr. Speaker? In 1971 the cost of living rose by 5 per cent, the largest annual increase in our cost of living in a decade. Also in the year 1971 we find that the unemployment index is the highest for at least the last 16 years. I do not have the statistics prior to that date. I must point out, however, that increasing unemployment has been one of the main features of this administration since it took office almost four years ago. We find that in 1968 and 1969 the annual average unemployment in Canada was 315,000. In 1970, it was up to 495,000 and in 1971 the annual average showed 552,000 jobless Canadians.

The government has tried to soft pedal the unemployment situation in Canada. The Prime Minister and others in this House have glibly talked about higher than normal increases in the labour force and in the participation rates as compared with the 1963-67 period. A review of the statistics clearly shows that the increase in the labour force for the 1968-71 period is substantially lower than in the 1963-67 period, and the participation rate increase is also much lower. The leader of this group thoroughly squelched this argument by the government when he spoke in the Throne Speech debate on February 18, so I do not intend to cover those points again.

Canada has the largest unemployment rate of any western industrialized nation. Most of the problem can be attributed directly to the programs and policies of this Liberal government. Some of the trouble can be traced back many years to the economic policies adopted by the old line parties at that time. I refer to the established policy of shipping increasing amounts of raw materials out of our country to be processed elsewhere. The failure

of successive governments, including the one now in power, to rectify this situation is largely responsible for part of the unemployment which we have today.

There is no sign that this government has learned this hard economic lesson, which has cost Canadians hundreds of thousands of jobs and deprived many of our young talented people of job opportunities in their own country. I am hopeful, however, that at long last Canadians are waking up to the fact that a completely new approach must be taken toward the development of our natural resources. I am certain it will not come from the policies and programs of the present administration, which have given little indication of it over the past three and a half years, or in those measures it hopes to present to this session of the 28th parliament.

I would like to deal briefly with the current unemployment insurance situation and its effect on our unemployed workers. I would say at the outset that I have been able to assist hundreds and have had the full co-operation of the unemployment insurance personnel. I must say that those employed in the unemployment insurance personnel offices in my area, and in areas outside, have co-operated with me fully, and I can certainly commend the work they have done in helping me iron out many of the difficult problems that have been brought to my attention. The administration of the new Unemployment Insurance Act, however, has been anything but satisfactory. Ever since it became law at the end of June, 1971, it became increasingly apparent that the administrative aspects of the legislation had been badly bungled. I cannot agree with those in government who insist that only a relatively small percentage of workers is involved. Most claimants experienced delays far in excess of the promised processing time for claims. A smaller percentage of workers had the misfortune to get really bogged down in the processing of their claims and had great difficulty in getting them straightened out. I know of many claimants who went without benefits for months and in the process suffered immeasurably.

• (1610)

Many workers were forced for the first time in their lives to ask for welfare assistance. They had the humiliating experience of having their credit in the community stopped and the experience of not being able to pay their bills. This administrative fiasco has left many Canadians bitter and angry over the government's administrative handling of the new Unemployment Insurance Act. Every member in this House has experienced similar problems in his constituency. We have found many of the causes for the lengthy delays experienced by the claimants and have passed them along to the department or to the officials concerned. I am certain that the work of the members has assisted in making the new legislation more workable. I trust that the committee which will deal with this problem can come up with some meaningful recommendations to amend both the Unemployment Insurance Act and its regulations. There are several points, however, which I feel should be raised at this time.

One of the main causes of trouble with unemployment insurance claims is the far too complicated application forms. If some mistake is made by the applicant in filling out the form, then the stage is set for a series of lengthy