

then that the governments—Conservative as well as Liberal—tried to set up special programs.

An attempt was made to create bodies which would enable us to restore the much sought after balance, which would reduce unemployment and which would mainly eliminate seasonal unemployment. All sorts of programs were developed, ARDA, FRED, PFRA in Western Canada and, special programs for the Maritimes. We endeavoured with all sorts of programs to alleviate regional disparities and seasonal unemployment, even to create a state of nearly full employment. After all these experiments, all these efforts, we realize that we have not yet struck at the root of evil since it still persists.

The situation is not perhaps as desperate as it was described. Of course, when one person who wants to work is unemployed it is a tragedy, but when 300,000 persons are involved it is a greater tragedy yet. However, if we admit that in an economy such as ours, a 3 per cent unemployment rate is acceptable, then a 4.7 per cent unemployment rate is not a tragedy for the country as a whole, in view of the excessive unemployment which prevails in the Maritimes and in the province of Quebec.

The tragedy exists in the Maritimes and in the Quebec area, below Trois-Rivières. A real human tragedy exists there and I agree with the opposition on that point. But I do not believe all the alarming statements made yesterday in this house are well-founded as regards the rest of Canada, where there is of course unemployment and underemployment, but where the situation has not yet reached the proportions of a crisis.

The efforts made have not proved satisfactory. The establishment of the Atlantic Development Board has undoubtedly been of great assistance, but that agency was also unable to solve the problem in the Maritimes.

It was therefore essential to find something else and that is what we have been striving at since the government asked us to look after regional development. And I say "us", as I was not the only one concerned, since efforts were made by the whole department. This is not simply a matter of creating a department with a reference to regional development in its name, but mainly of considering the passing of new legislation, of a new policy, in order to solve the problems that have proved until now unsolvable in spite of the willingness shown by the various governments that dealt with them.

Alleged Failure to Reduce Unemployment

There have been fragmentary efforts, such as the creation of DEVCO, to cope with underemployment and unemployment in a particular area of this country. There was the DOSCO experience, with the co-operation of the government of Nova Scotia, to prevent the situation from deteriorating, and the experience was a worthy one. But in spite of all those efforts, of unequal value, unemployment still exists in Canada.

I tried to go through the laws we are now administering. There is for instance the industrial development legislation, enabling us to promote industrial development in certain designated areas.

This law has been useful in the past but everybody realizes today its defects and its shortcomings.

For example, some cities that are relatively prosperous are located in a designated area and can get grants from the federal government.

The reverse situation is also possible. Indeed cities that suffer from economic depression cannot get grants from the federal government, because the area in which they are located cannot be designated.

We know that several millions were wasted in some areas of the country because our policies were inadequate. It was an experiment and if we had to do the whole thing over again, we would certainly not make the same mistakes. And here, I am referring to all the governments, because such attempts were sincere. When some hon. members state dramatically in this house that the government never did anything to fight unemployment, that it was not concerned about the jobless, they are indulging somewhat in demagogy. If they tell us, however, that it is not perfect, that the instruments are not sufficient and that the effort is not big enough, this I will concede immediately. This is what we shall attempt to do.

If the government is accused of doing absolutely nothing about unemployment and the unemployed, this looks more like demagogy than like serious argumentation.

No doubt remains when one studies the progress of social security in Canada and when one examines our whole social legislation. All this is intended to protect the workers against the possibility of unemployment, of disease and against the risks of life, in general. All the same, the situation in 1969 is different from what it was 25, 30 or 50 years ago.