

*Alleged Failure to Reduce Unemployment*

other areas in this country which ought to have greater priority and which require their immediate attention. The title of the latest report of the Economic Council of Canada is "The Challenge of Growth and Change". This is a challenge that has been ducked by this government, just as it has ducked the recommendations of that body. In reading the reports of the Council for recent years one is struck by the number of times the expression "full employment" crops up. Invariably, this phrase is coupled with a strong affirmation that it is one of the principal keys to Canada's future.

• (9:00 p.m.)

I suppose everyone has read the latest report of Canada's Bureau of Statistics on Canada's labour force. I read it and I was appalled by what I read. Here we are, a nation spending close to \$11 billion a year on our central government and taking in well over \$10 billion in revenue, with an export trade reckoned in the multi-billions. This Country is the envy of many underdeveloped nations and not a few industrialized nations. It has a high standard of living, is supposedly possessed of space, uncounted natural and human resources and a merciful detachment from the problems created by unfriendly neighbours. Yet with all these advantages, with all our achievements, our affluence and our potential, we must admit to an inability to gainfully employ close to 5 per cent of our people who are able and willing to work. This is what we must be concerned about. In spite of all these advantages, we are still in trouble. Surely, the solution of this problem presents sufficient challenge for the most imaginative and dynamic government, which this government says it is.

This figure of close to 5 per cent unemployed, 4.7 per cent to be exact, is bad enough in itself. But what is worse is the regional breakdown. Here, we find a rate of 7.1 per cent for the Atlantic provinces; 6.8 per cent for Quebec; 3 per cent for Ontario; 3.4 per cent on the prairies and 5.4 per cent in British Columbia. The Economic Council of Canada states that the level of unemployment in the Atlantic provinces, and to a lesser degree in Quebec, is persistently higher than the national average at all times. The Council further points out that when the national level of unemployment falls, the level of unemployment in these regions also falls but their share of total unemployment tends to rise. Should we not be concerned about the

[Mr. Alexander.]

apathy and complacency? Such a condition points to the need for flexible policies applicable in differing degrees to regional needs rather than blanket policies which take no regard for regional needs and only accentuate regional disparity.

Everyone will remember that one of the promises of this government was to tackle and overcome this problem of regional disparity. The only regional action taken by it so far has been the setting up of regional desks in the office of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). This is hardly action calculated to equalize economic and social opportunities across Canada. The people know about this situation and want to know why we are not solving these problems rather than proceeding in the pussy-footing way in which this government seems to have become so very adept. You may wonder, Mr. Speaker, why, representing an urban Ontario constituency as I do, I should be concerned with farmers and fishermen in the maritimes or wheat producers on the prairies. The answer is quite simple. I believe this is a united country, one country, and that what will benefit a Canadian in one region will benefit Canadians in all regions; what weakens one region of Canada is bound to weaken the whole national structure.

My chief concern right now is that we are not doing adequately the things that should be done to provide the most employment. Figures are available in abundance to show that our universities, technical and vocational schools and other specialized training establishments have not been able to keep their output of employable Canadians in gear with the rapidly changing demands of the job market. Nor do I believe that our present policies covering labour mobility, retraining and placement, are in step with the tremendous changes that have taken place and are still taking place at an accelerated rate in the demand of the Canadian economy for workers. I believe our most pressing need is for priority government action that would co-ordinate support of the labour force and those seeking employment to ensure maximum efficiency in the future use of Canada's labour force.

The situation today is that we are turning out too many people who are skilled in areas where demand for their services is falling off and are not turning out enough in areas where demand is growing rapidly. This is a major problem which faces the 88,000 young