

The Canadian Economy

I think it is time the people of Canada had their attention directed to the service which the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) in this Parliament has rendered time after time when great economic questions have faced this country. He has been the first man to sound the clarion call of truth. He was the first man to see the fallacies, the nonsensical ingredients of the white paper. He was the first man to see the errors in the estate tax legislation, and he was the first man to point out the inequities and the vacuity of the government's program in reference to unemployment.

One thing did not surprise me tonight. I have grown accustomed to a situation where each time the Minister of Finance makes a speech he presents a new budget. This is nothing new. This is becoming part of the new system of fiscal flexibility, I suppose. It has been said, and well said—

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): This is the first time a budget has been presented under Standing Order 26.

Mr. Macquarrie: Our expert on the rules, the venerable, learned and hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) points out that this is the first budget that has been presented under Standing Order 26. So, to that novelty I pay whatever tribute such a novelty deserves. But while in fairness, and one wants to be fair, the government is rustling up some sense of urgency, its members have not rustled up a sense of shame. They seem not really moved by the power of the terrible figures which are being visited upon the people of Canada tonight. I say that there is not really too much sensitivity, because I have read carefully the minister's statement, and I heard it. An interesting portion was his collation of the unemployed. He said, and I quote:

No doubt the explanation is complex. Those who are recorded as unemployed include:

- men and women who have lost their regular employment;
- teenagers of age 14 or older who have decided not to return to school;
- college students who, for the time being at least, have dropped their courses;
- women who have decided to seek work;
- a large number who are seeking part-time work;
- some who are drawing unemployment insurance and some who are not;

—some who are drawing welfare benefits and some who are not.

My God, he has everybody there but nonagenarians, and there are not too many of those around even in these healthy times. So it is this group, the young, the old, the people who want jobs, the people who don't want jobs, just about everybody, who comprise the unemployed. The situation has become largely like regional disparity. If the whole country is depressed you don't have to single out any one particular area. But, Mr. Speaker, I happen to come from an area that no matter how far the rest of the country depresses, our area still seems to be a little worse off because of the government which is not at the head of affairs. The Atlantic area economy is one which is used to getting the short end of the stick, used to figuring prominently in all those economic indices which are bad, and at the bottom of the list of all those that are good. We are

[Mr. Macquarrie.]

growing used to that, but this does not mean that we are getting to like it.

The other day I was impressed by APEC's statement, and I understood the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) had not read the report which reads as follows:

The Atlantic Provinces Economic Council has produced a scathing indictment of the federal government's regional development efforts.

In its fifth annual review, published today, APEC assesses the 30-month record—

Thirty months, not a bad length of time.

—of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion and its predecessor agencies set up by Ottawa to reduce economic disparities in Canada.

It does not call DREE a failure. But the tone of the report comes close to giving this impression—

We Maritimers are given to euphemism. We don't quite call it a failure.

The considerable degree of ministerial discretion allowed in the allocation of federal funds makes DREE susceptible to political manipulation—

• (1:10 a.m.)

Finally—and I think this is very germane to a debate such as this—the Atlantic provinces Economic Council report goes on to say:

The impact of DREE during its first years has also been reduced by national policies designed to dampen inflation.

You remember—a high degree of unemployment would be acceptable because we were going to fight inflation and drive it around the corner. It seems we are living in a circular city, because we never got inflation around the corner. The report continues:

In spite of suggestions that the region has been shielded from the full extent of these policies, APEC says the federal government's record of balancing economic policies has not been good. It believes, also, that inflation has not been halted, only postponed.

I say that when today's figures show 10.3 per cent unemployment in the Atlantic provinces, this is intolerable and not the kind of thing that any government supporter could preen himself about.

Mr. Muir: It is 25 per cent in some areas.

Mr. Macquarrie: Yes. That is the average for the whole area, a figure which is much higher than it has been for months. I say to the government that its national policies are exacerbating the problems in the Atlantic region and that the things it is doing add to the raw unemployment figures. The government is going about the Atlantic provinces closing down operations and the very thing it should be doing something about, regional disparity, is closing down the DREE office in the Atlantic provinces. The figures nationally are bad enough, but the figures regionally are worse. I say it ill-behoves anyone to score political marks with the economy of this country in its present state.

I am sorry that I do not have any issues of the *Chilliwack Progress* here, but I have an issue of the *Toronto Telegram* and I naturally subscribe to all that is said in an article by Dr. Gillies, the dean of administrative studies at York University, one of the most eminent economists this country has ever produced. On October 12 he wrote: