

*The Address—Mr. Martineau*

I say that today, after about ten months in office, this minority government should be in a position to give us an answer once and for all.

But, in order to judge objectively, let us study the government's record.

There are the promises. There is no doubt that they were made. Last week the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) gave us a very detailed list of the promises made by the representatives of the Canadian people who now sit on the treasury benches. This picture is neither very edifying nor of a nature to give confidence.

Let us consider the economic, social and cultural fields, the field of relations between the two groups which make up our country, and we shall see that, generally speaking, the government did not apply the principles they advocated on hustings throughout the country just a few months ago. In a specific and particular way, they practically took no action to make their promises come true.

Mr. Speaker, if, on the other hand, we look at the 60 days of action and decision, all non-partisan observers, newspapermen and all the others, are of the opinion that they were not a period of action and decision, but of trial and error, panic, failure and bitterness. The net result was a fiasco and complete confusion.

But, has the government recovered itself since then and is it proceeding towards the achievement of the objectives decided upon and for which it is, after all, responsible to the people?

Let us look at the economic development. For the hon. members opposite, this was an objective of primary importance. Well, what progress has been made in that sector? We had the budget of course, the famous budget. But is there a person sound in mind, even among most of the partisans of the hon. members opposite, who can say that this budget and the measures forecasted in it were a success? Unfortunately, the people of Canada are well aware that it was disastrous.

What remains of that much publicized budget? Next to nothing. In fact, a few taxes remain. There remains the tax which is the subject of this amendment, the tax on building materials.

Well, Mr. Speaker, are the persons engaged personally in this field in favour of this tax? It is a well established fact that it entails an accelerated disorganization and bewilderment of the business world and the building enterprises. Those who complain bemoan the confusion created by this tax which is unworkable, impossible to administer, that is

the persons responsible for the administration of this tax do not know exactly how to go about it.

What confusion there is in the building field. Accumulations, inventories, precipitation. We do not know whether this tax will last, whether it will double or will reach the much talked about 11 per cent.

And this, Mr. Speaker, is nevertheless one of the measures which were supposed to stimulate economic progress and put an end to unemployment. Is it not obvious that such a tax has never been an incentive to progress? On the contrary, it is of such a nature as to shatter the very objectives that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gordon) had set forth in his budget speech.

Why would the house vote for this tax? Is there a single member of this house who conscientiously would vote for such an iniquitous measure?

Mr. Speaker, apart from the taxes included in the budget, what measure has been put before us to further economic progress? There was the creation of the economic council. We have but the enigmatic smile of the former president of the privy council, now secretary of state for cultural affairs (Mr. Lamontagne), to tell us about the achievements of this council.

We are a long way, Mr. Speaker, from that indicative planning the minister talked about when he brought his legislation before the house with much fanfare. We do not even have an inkling of indicative planning or anything. It is true that numerous promises were made over and over again during the election campaign on the matter of full employment and that those gentlemen had pledged they would be the ones to give work to the unemployed and that all able-bodied men would find remunerative work.

Well, we have had almost ten months of this administration and unemployment is always at a dangerous high level with Quebec, unfortunately, still in the forefront.

In spite of what the Minister of Labour (Mr. MacEachen) just said concerning the half-measures he had announced there are still almost 500,000 unemployed in this country. If the government members are satisfied with those figures which are a little lower than a year ago, I must say that they are satisfied with very little and that they are far from carrying out the promise of full employment which was one of the main planks in their platform.

In the field of social security, there is also a lack of progress. Let us look at the question of pensions. The plan is not greeted favourably neither by the officials of the major provinces nor by the experts in the field, in