

wanderings by the government? I hope sincerely that the Prime Minister's announcement this morning about Bell Island will be followed by something more substantial than the assistance in outward mobility to those people. I would hope that from the solutions which surely are now being mulled over, something will be done for those people. I hope some interim measure will be taken to keep the mine open perhaps until the end of the year, with government subsidy assistance, to help those people. I ask that not because those people are from my province or from my constituency, but because all maritimers know that if any part of the region suffers we all suffer; if any part flourishes, we are all the richer and the better for it.

We have each, in our areas, known economic adversity. I would think that a wise and careful government would adopt the same policy with regard to any region as it would in relation to the nation. It should know that no nation is truly prosperous if regions thereof are suffering economically. I think one thing could be said about the preceding government: that its outlook and development of economic policies was national.

I have been hearing all the bouquets which have been thrown at the minister. Some of them were so heavy they were heard. The minister made a mistake in his seeming unawareness that many policies and practices which he regards as useful in dealing with over-all national economic problems do not apply necessarily to some regions. I would not go so far as some of my colleagues, to say there is nothing good in his budget, although I have not time in 30 minutes to think of many good things. He may have sound policies in his boom restraint, but these do not apply to an area where, according to the latest statistics, 63,000 people are on the unemployment role. Yet none of them could be found to work on the causeway during the summer.

I think that he should recognize and should have recognized that policies which may be useful in the national scene could, when translated to the Atlantic region, be downright harmful. We do not need the application of brakes since we are not having any boom that is in any great danger of going bust, to use the vernacular.

I would suggest that the minister might have prepared himself by a more careful scrutiny of that very valuable and interesting document, the Second Annual Review of the Economic Council of Canada, which body has made a careful study of regional growth and

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disparities. I wonder why the minister did not take advantage of this very important major piece of research.

● (4:50 p.m.)

I think the government should as a matter of urgent priority give attention to the serious economic problems of Atlantic Canada, because before us at this very time are many indications that the gap is not narrowing but widening.

I should like to read a recent editorial from a great newspaper in Atlantic Canada—the *Fredericton Gleaner*. With reference to unemployment, this article, which appeared on March 18, says:

Nationally there was a slight improvement over January. Unemployment dropped by 3,000 in Canada, a percentage improvement of one-tenth of one per cent.

In the Atlantic provinces the reverse was true. Unemployment increased by 2,000.

This new decline in regional employment comes on top of the persistent chronic lag of the region behind the rest of the nation. Last month the unemployment rate in the Atlantic provinces was 10.9 per cent, in the remainder of the nation the figure was 4.5 per cent.

An unemployment rate of nearly 11 per cent is a serious thing in itself, especially since this is a period termed "prosperous". If this is prosperity, what will happen to this region in a recession?

The initiative has not been seized and such halfway measures as have been taken (Prime Minister Pearson says we should be "grateful" for them) have come so far from closing the gap that it is actually widening in spite of them.

Following carefully the rules of the house, I subscribe precisely and fully to that comment.

I never thought that after witnessing the plethora of commissions which have been and are being conducted over Canada I would make the recommendation I am now about to make. I imagine there was never a time when we had so many inquiries going, and I suppose we would reach a stage of social equilibrium, as the social scientists would say, if half the population were investigating the other half. I have heard—though I believe this is apocryphal—that the universities are considering setting up a course intending to produce Bachelors of Inquiry. But since this brilliant budget—and I must place quotation marks on the word "brilliant"—has failed to take account of the regional disparity in the Atlantic provinces, I believe it is time to set up an all-embracing inquiry into the economy of the maritimes and the Atlantic provinces. Such an inquiry would consider all the factors, trends, conditions and prospects of growth within the region, and, what is more