

*Alleged Failure of Employment Policies*

I think he understands the situation but the cabinet is dictated to by three or four big cheeses who make decisions on a theoretical, book approach they have been working on for 20 years and which they now find they are in a position to implement. This, of course, has an impact on the Canadian nation.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Davenport spoke for 10 or 15 minutes and then left the House. He asked how we can implement manpower policies with the resources we have in order to offset the government's policies. Well, the Committee on Regional Development last year went on a junket out west—that is about all it was. We did not receive any evidence, but we toured the countryside and observed a number of projects. We observed the ARDA project in northern Alberta and in Edson. We looked at the beautiful New Start program in Lac-la-Biche and in Prince Albert. We visited the neglected interlake area of Manitoba which under the Department of Regional Economic Expansion had a great plan which has not materialized.

As an educator and as a person involved in a good deal of research before coming to the House of Commons, perhaps unfortunately, I was most impressed by the work done under the New Start program. This was an experimental program in which the government was looking at ways in which people at the bottom of the scale in terms of employability, training and education could be upgraded, retrained and perhaps given an injection of new hope and a change of attitude.

Many of the people involved in this program were deserving people. I remember well the Lac-la-Biche and Prince Albert experiments. After several months in this program the people involved were tremendously different. It was planned that this experimental program would be taken from the experimental stage after the research and technocratic approach and would be applied across the nation. This would have been a major program.

I would have thought, if the government were to launch the program it has now of creating unemployment, it would at the same time have tried to involve the people in a comprehensive program of retraining and upgrading so that those who are forced out of work and are on unemployment insurance and social assistance could receive a little bit of assistance from the government. If they were brought into a program of retraining, perhaps they would be in a position to fill the

[Mr. Lundrigan.]

void in the labour market because there are many opportunities which people cannot accept due to lack of training. Such a program would have improved the over-all potential of this nation. But this was not done.

The minister will probably get up after I have finished and say I have rocks in my head and am unrealistic. I am sure, however, that the minister is unhappy with the budget he has in order to do the massive job he must do. There is not a prosperous nation in the free world in which money spent on education, retraining and upgrading has not produced great dividends. The minister knows this. There is not a single economist in North America who would disagree when I say that money put into these programs does pay dividends. When a nation can give priority to this type of program, it is an indication that it is a prosperous nation.

Mr. Speaker, I am trying to make suggestions and to be constructive. I have sufficient material that I could continue for many hours. I should like to see Parliament—not any particular minister—not announce great flowery programs but take the matter of unemployment in Canada very seriously and set up some kind of special committee aside from the committees which from time to time travel around the countryside listening to briefs and then return and spend many days listening to more briefs.

I should like to see Parliament set up a special committee to look at the unemployment picture in a very deep manner in order to obtain a clear picture of the situation. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics gives a diluted, watered-down version of the situation. They talk about an unemployment figure of 13 per cent in respect of Atlantic Canada while it is really closer to 20 per cent. People who are not on welfare or the unemployment insurance books find they are not included in many of the sophisticated statistics published by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics.

If a special committee were set up for this purpose, I would be willing to spend many hours as a member of that committee looking at the unemployment situation so that Parliament could have an appreciation of how devastating is this kind of situation on families and on people. It is totally unacceptable that part of Canada today—almost all of Canada—should be involved in a desperate unemployment situation and that one area should have an unemployment figure of 20 per cent. Even if I were to stand up today