

*The Budget—Mr. Michaud*

until the present time government members have steadfastly maintained that there was hardly any unemployment at all in the country. When we remind them of the seriousness of the situation we are charged with what has now become a commonplace phrase, of being prophets of doom and gloom, though everything we have said is mild and factual, unlike the extravagant statements made by the present Minister of Finance in 1955 when only half as many Canadians were unemployed and when that unemployment was purely seasonal.

But recently there has been some sort of a new turn in the views of the leaders of the government with respect to this matter. Until recent date we were told there was no unemployment problem, that it was just an economic pause, and that the existence of a severe crisis was just a figment of the imagination of the opposition members. However, in a national telecast last week the Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) finally admitted that there really existed an economic recession, but then he hastened to add that this recession was still due to the mismanagement of the Liberals prior to the advent of the present government in 1957.

If it has taken the government over three years to discover that there really was a serious problem, of course we should not reasonably expect that a solution will be found too readily. Haste, decision and readiness we know are not characteristics of the present government; so let us be patient, for we have the assurance from the Prime Minister himself that as long as he is Prime Minister of this country no one will suffer from unemployment.

In the meantime, in spite of these solemn assurances unemployment is mounting and people are suffering. In my own province of New Brunswick we are faced with a number of unemployed proportionally at least twice as high as in the province of Ontario. It is estimated that in some sections of the province at least 20 per cent of our labour force is unemployed at the present time, while our average per capita income is only two thirds of the national average and not much more than half of that of the wealthier provinces.

Small wonder if our people are leaving by the thousands every year in quest of employment in another land, a startling paradox in our immigration policy. But these are all matters which we must not mention lest we be accused of being unpatriotic to our country, of rendering a disservice to our country, of selling our country short, yes, of being prophets of doom and gloom. What a sham

performance by a government wishing to conceal its own inefficiency and its complete bankruptcy of ideas.

Personally, I feel that I have received a mandate from the people I represent in this house. This mandate calls for me to voice fearlessly at all times the needs and requirements of these people. This I have always endeavoured to do in the past, and will always endeavour to do as long as I am entrusted with that responsibility. No amount of chiding on the part of the government will ever silence me or ever induce me to retreat from what I believe it is my duty to perform.

I state now that there exist in the riding I represent, as well as in other parts of New Brunswick, certain conditions which are intolerable in a country as full of resources as ours; and I further state that such conditions are an indictment of the government which allows them to continue. The people of my county and of my province deserve better, as a birthright, than the privilege, for a large number of them, of taking the road of expatriation as soon as they attain working age. I was told that last year over 50 people from one parish of some 200 families alone reluctantly had to leave for the United States of America to seek work. This is the pattern in every other parish of my county as well as in many other parts of the province.

I emphasize that this is an intolerable situation and I entreat the government to pay heed to it before it assumes still more serious proportions. The only thing I am asking for these people is an opportunity for them to get work and earn an honest living in the country in which they were born, in which they live, and, what is much more important, in which they wish to remain. They have an inherent right as good honest God-fearing citizens to ask that of the government of their country.

With respect to the economic problems in the province of New Brunswick I should like at this time to make some remarks in line with the recommendations and observations made by the premier of the province, the Hon. Louis Robichaud, at the dominion-provincial conference in July last. After reminding the conference that the province of New Brunswick was one of the original partners in the Canadian confederation, Premier Robichaud stated that when we united with Nova Scotia and the then province of Canada to form a new dominion in 1867 we did so with great expectations. Indeed, when we agreed to the confederation pact in 1867 we earnestly expected that at all times through the years of the development of this new country our economic growth would at least keep abreast of the growth of the other partner provinces.