

Mr. Alexander: This is what their mandate is about, Mr. Speaker. We cannot tolerate an indifferent or complacent attitude to the disparities in the quality of life being experienced by individuals, which are unquestionably obvious, nor can such an attitude be accepted as a philosophy of life. It is senseless and useless to express great theories for national unity if within this country there are some 4 million people on the poverty line, and yet we still remain indifferent. These are the have-nots, Mr. Speaker, and their potential strength as one voice is indeed a force to be reckoned with.

The aptness of the motion now under debate is not only demonstrated by the frightening figures on national unemployment, by the bad state of many of our primary industries and the dangerous condition of our commodity exports but, even more clearly, by the lethargic approach of the government to these problems and the futility of what little action it has taken to solve them.

The government's chief fault, in my view, is its consistent refusal to tackle the gut issues that face Canada and which, every day, weigh upon the minds and purses of ordinary citizens. After almost six months in office, the government has totally failed to come to grips with the real issues of concern to the average Canadian citizen. We have yet to learn of any legislation designed to widen and improve the employment prospects of thousands of young Canadians who will be coming into the labour market. There has been nothing suggested to assist workers already in the labour force to adjust to the changed conditions of that market. I have heard members of the opposition continually ask the government to state their policies, ideas and intentions, and members of the government continually state "This is under review" and "That is under review." This is a time for action, Mr. Speaker.

The latest figures on unemployment prove that the government has been able to do nothing to arrest the perennial economic scourge of unemployment, let alone cure it. We cannot allow an accumulation of grievances to grow in the fields of unemployment, poverty, slum conditions, rural poverty, urban waste, inflation and higher taxes. Grievances, if allowed to smolder and simmer over long periods of time, can have disastrous results.

When one thinks that by 1991 the province of Ontario alone is going to have some 10 million people in it then, I would respectfully

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submit that we have to be concerned, and this government must give leadership. When one thinks that 80 per cent of our population will be living in urban areas by 1981, we have to be extremely concerned. I believe that these fundamental problems existing in Canada appear to have escaped the imagination and attention of our government.

Prior to June 25 last the government promised little, and to date has delivered less.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Alexander: Members of the government promised not only to govern, but to create. They were going to create a new Canadian society, the just society, in which we all would have hope, in which we all would have a life of decent quality. But in my view, Mr. Speaker, any society, just or otherwise, can only develop on a foundation of healthy economic growth. Healthy economic growth means job opportunities, decent annual incomes, steady demand and steady production and, last but not least, equality of opportunity to share in national development and national prosperity.

No society can be termed just that contains within it the regional disparities that we find in Canada. No society can be truly just that can callously write off, for the sake of convenience, primary industries that happen to have fallen on evil days and whole sections of the population who happen, through no fault of theirs, to be forced to share this condition. I am thinking of the fishing industry, of the farming industry and of the steel industry which, incidentally, is claiming that the anti-dumping legislation is too little and too late. People in the steel industry are concerned about whether the government is prepared to advise the people of Canada to buy Canadian, because this seems to be their only hope.

But this government is obsessed with abstract things. It has no time or inclination to tackle unpleasant emergencies such as exist in the Atlantic provinces among fishermen, in eastern Canada in the agricultural industry and across the wheat producing prairies. The government has less inclination to tackle the urban problems and the transportation problems that are coupled with these other problems. We are asked to treat as urgent, and this is what concerns me, such problems as constitutional reform, amendments to various acts covering social behaviour, language rights and the reform of parliament. All these may have a place of importance, but I tell this government there are