

The Budget—Mr. Argue

this debate is: Why all the fanfare; why all the build-up for a budget of so little substance and of so little significance to the Canadian nation?

In presenting his statement to the house the Minister of Finance (Mr. Fleming) seemed almost totally unaware of the great national emergency that exists in the country at this time. He said at one time, against this background: How is Canada faring? On the whole it is faring well.

One of the first requirements of a government that would deal with an emergency is its ability to comprehend that an emergency in fact exists. Surely there should be no need for members of the opposition to bring forward evidence at this time that our country faces a grave national crisis, that our gross national product has remained almost stationary, that our country is failing to advance, that we are failing to meet the challenge from abroad, in an economic sense. The government has sat idly by while hundreds of thousands of Canadians face insecurity and inadequate incomes.

The recent figures show very widespread unemployment in the country. The Prime Minister (Mr. Diefenbaker) goes on television, and does he acknowledge the existence of this great emergency? Not at all. He says that in certain years under a former administration the statistics were even worse than they now are, and he apparently takes comfort from the fact that we are not yet quite as bad as we were in the 1930's.

The Minister of Finance, I noticed, in trying to alibi the unemployment situation, referred to immigration at one point. At another point he said that one of the main reasons why we have great difficulty in providing jobs is because there were so many babies born during the war years.

I am ashamed of a minister and a government that puts forward the excuse that there are too many Canadians coming of working age and the government is unable to do anything about providing work for our larger number of citizens. This is the lamest excuse that any government could possibly put forward as a reason why it is unable to deal with the situation today. The government says it arose back in the war years, there were too many babies in the early 1940's. There were too many for the Conservative party in 1961 to do anything about providing jobs and job opportunities for the people of this country.

Mr. Bell (Carleton): That is a fantastic distortion.

Mr. Argue: The hon. member for Essex East (Mr. Martin) has made a speech, and the Prime Minister is here. The Prime Minister

is to come on later. Somebody had better pull this government out of the hole it is in; somebody had better rescue the government in this debate. I am inclined to regard the Prime Minister would be as good as anyone in this endeavour, but even the right hon. gentleman will have the greatest difficulty rescuing the government from the facts of this great national emergency.

One of the reasons why the government is experiencing such difficulty now is that it believes wholeheartedly in the private enterprise system. This means allowing business to make the decisions while the government sits out in an irresponsible role. The fact of the matter is that the government has to play a role of leadership. The fact of the matter is that the government should bring forward at this time, in our judgment, a great national plan to deal with the many urgent requirements of the Canadian nation, requirements which if steps are taken to fulfil them would provide jobs for all Canadians.

There are many things which need to be done and which should be done at this time. Canadians need more homes. There should be a vast program of home building, a vast program of slum clearance instead of the halting, limping program adopted by the government which meant fewer starts instead of more starts in housing last year. Canadians need more schools and they need more hospitals. I think our citizens could use more automobiles. I think they could use all the automobiles that our factories could produce if they had jobs and incomes with which to buy those products. Go to any urban community in Canada and, I suggest, hon. members will find a community which needs more schools and more hospitals.

We need a vast system of modern roads in Canada and I suggest here is a place where the government should be playing a leading role at this time. As long ago as 1912 the United States initiated a great road building program which included transcontinental highways, interstate highways, main state highways and farm to market roads as well as roads over which school buses operate. Instead of having a vision in the field of road building, this government has carried on the one road policy of the former administration. The government has decided that nothing more is to be done until the trans-Canada highway is completed. I venture to suggest that Canada will celebrate its one hundredth anniversary without having so much as a single trans-Canada highway completed to adequate standards from one end of this country to the other.

Certainly, this forecast will prove justified unless we have a greatly changed policy in relation to highways and road building. Now