

*Alleged Failure to Reduce Unemployment*

that unemployment is, to a great degree, a geographical problem, or at least that geography adds so much to it, we promised in the election campaign—and we are carrying out that promise—to set up a department of forestry and urban redevelopment primarily to deal with the particular and unique problems of people who because of the size of this country are so far away from the main stream of industry and from the central provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Their problems require special attention. If I may pay a compliment to a particular colleague, I may say that I know of no minister better suited for this particular job than is Jean Marchand because of his labour background and because of his ability.

• (5:10 p.m.)

I could go on and on, but most members are aware of all these programs and it would be a very partisan member indeed who would not care to admit that the foresight in setting up the Department of Industry and the Department of Manpower, the foresight of entering into the auto pact—though the move was widely questioned at the time—has been abundantly justified in terms of jobs for the workers of this country.

The Economic Council has again drawn attention to some of our problems. I do not wish to keep repeating them, but as I pointed out earlier we must continue to export and we are meeting increased competition from other industrial nations of the world, such as Japan, Sweden, and from Britain with its devalued pound. What has been our record in this field? It is all very well for the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) to talk as he does. He is an astute politician. I recognize some of his ploys; I have used them myself on occasions. He has noted our activities in the field of trade and commerce; he has said that next year might not be such a good year.

I have looked carefully over the record for the six years during which this government has been in office. In fact, I went back to 1961, because in all fairness I think the momentum may have begun then. In 1961-62 there was an increase of 8.2 per cent in the value of our exports. In the following year, the increase amounted to 10.3 per cent. In 1963-64 it was 16.1 per cent, in 1964-65 it was 6.5 per cent. In 1965-66 the total value of our exports increased by 16.5 per cent, and in 1966-67, by 12.3 per cent. The indication at the end of the first nine months of 1967-68 is that the value of our exports was almost 14 per cent higher than in the comparable period

[Mr. Mackasey.]

of the preceding year. So, here again we have not only met the objective set by the Economic Council but we are surpassing it.

I say to prophets of gloom and doom that this is one psychological weapon we can do without for the next few months. There is an old saying about figures that is there are statistics, statisticians and liars, in that order. We can look at statistics and become very optimistic, if we want to. We can look at the same statistics and be pessimistic. In recent months some newspapers, perhaps using statistics of the dominion bureau, have printed somewhat pessimistic headlines.

For my part, I do not think I can be blamed if my attention was attracted to an article written by a young lady—I assume the author is a young lady—called Judith McMahon. She used the same statistics but instead of publishing the figures of the labour force without analysing them she went to the trouble of analysing the monthly statements of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. She analysed unemployment weighing regional factors and seasonal factors—students going back to their studies, fishermen who are normally laid off in winter—and wrote an article which appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* on December 13 under the heading: “Boom is Opening Up Jobs”. I was attracted by this headline. I got hold of the same sources of reference and studied them. I suggest that all hon. members should do so, because I do not think I could do justice to this article if I were to try to read a lot of statistics into the record. The author did draw attention to something of distinct importance. She wrote:

A general rise in economic activity has opened up thousands of new jobs in trade, services, manufacturing and public administration. Some of the laid-off workers who frequently do not work all winter were able to find jobs in these industries.

If one takes the trouble to look at the statistics on a regional basis, this is precisely the fact. True, the overall picture is not as bright because of increased unemployment in certain other areas. I thought, then, that since we are at the beginning of a new year and since there are some fairly accurate year end figures now available I should, as Minister of Labour and as a member of the cabinet, ascertain where the problems are most acute in order that we might perhaps do something about them. I found, for instance, that the number of unemployed in the Atlantic region increased during the whole year by only 3,000. That is an optimistic way of putting it; it