

Employment Programs

problem in Newfoundland that is so chronic it is almost beyond description. This winter we will have a larger percentage of people unemployed in my province than the United States or Canada had during the great depression. Let us stop fooling around with great political jargon and speeches. Let us have action. I hope the Minister of Finance or some other dignitary will stand up tomorrow and announce an all-inclusive policy to deal with the problem of unemployment.

[Translation]

Mr. Guy LeBlanc (Rimouski): Mr. Speaker, as several previous speakers, I also think it is time for action. It is through action that we will solve our problems and not through lengthy discussions.

However, as the old saying goes, since light comes from the exchange of ideas, and to bring my own contribution to the solution of those problems, it is my pleasure to express my opinion on this motion which relates to a most serious problem, as everyone says, namely that of unemployment. It is imperative to consider the measures taken by the government to help the unemployed and the poor as well as the new measures required.

About the general principle of the motion, when it is a matter of upward climb in the level of unemployment foreseen for this winter and steps to be taken to alleviate its consequences, we can only approve it. Indeed, we must congratulate the hon. member for York South (Mr. Lewis) for the opportunity given to us to discuss this serious problem.

The situation, specially in the Rimouski riding, which I have the honour to represent, and in the area of the Lower St. Lawrence and Gaspé, is not very rosy either. It is quite clear there is work to do in urban centres and in small towns, but in the so-called marginal municipalities there is a lot of unemployment. A great many citizens in these hamlets and villages, live mostly on government sponsored social measures, either federal or provincial. If we consider for instance certain figures, we see that in 1969 the monthly average was 16,437 unemployed in that region or 18 per cent of the labour force on the basis of the whole population. This is a very high rate of unemployment. For all Quebec the rate of unemployment was 6.9 per cent in 1969. This means that the rate of unemployment in our area is between two and three times higher than the provincial rate. Needless to say several families are in distress because of that unemployment. All of us want to do our utmost to solve this problem.

The motion states that according to certain economic experts, a record unemployment level is expected during winter. In the light of that essential action initiated to eliminate inflation, the government had foreseen those difficulties, but in my opinion the government must not solely be held responsible for the increased unemployment rate. Indeed, the various strikes by construction workers, post-office employees and other workers encouraged by union leaders, some of who are very good friends of the mover, have certainly contributed to create

[Mr. Lundrigan.]

some uneasiness, especially by unbalancing our economy and discouraging enterprise, especially since summer is over and that winter will soon be here.

We are all in favour of immediate steps being taken, of having the federal government come to as early an understanding as possible with the provinces and the municipalities with a view to reducing the unemployment rate during next winter. This is our ardent wish. However, it does not suffice to settle the unemployment problem, we have to solve various other problems as well to insure our financial and economic stability.

One thing has struck me in the speech of the mover whom I consider very clever and very competent: he has again referred to the terrorism in the province of Quebec.

It seems to me that we should take some action in that area and that we should give more objective consideration to the problems in order to achieve progress.

If I am not mistaken, he said a moment ago that unemployment is no more no less than the cause of terrorism and that the unemployed are terrorists. If we consider those who have or apparently have taken part in terrorist activities and those who have been arrested, we find that they are far from being among the unemployed.

One is a teacher, another an editorial writer for a well known magazine, a third a sociologist, another a taxi driver, another a lawyer and yet another an important union leader. I do not think the latter is unemployed as I know what salaries are paid to union leaders with the contributions of those poor workers and unemployed.

● (9:30 p.m.)

Some CBC announcers or moderators are far from being unemployed people from the point of view of their income. Some professors of the University of Quebec or other universities are equally far from being unemployed. Some of those born with a silver spoon in their mouths, certain students who can study thanks to the effort of governments and to the money of their parents are far from being unemployed people and it seems to me that those who promote all those terrorist movements in Quebec do belong to a privileged class.

In spite of all that, it can be said that the government took very serious action in order to reduce the unemployment rate and to check poverty. Let us simply consider the measures about unemployment insurance. Moreover, the government is soon to improve the lot of unemployed persons through the implementation of the recommendations of the white paper on the subject. It is expected that higher allowances will soon be approved. The Unemployment Insurance Act will apply across the board and benefits will be increased.

Some efforts at least have been made in the field of regional economic expansion. Members from other provinces have been upbraiding the Minister of Regional