

Anti-Inflation Policies

I will cut short my remarks, Mr. Speaker, to allow the hon. member for Broadview to speak.

● (9:50 p.m.)

Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview): Mr. Speaker, I thank the previous speaker for his courtesy and co-operation in permitting me to participate in this debate. After listening to speeches by members of the Conservative party and the Liberal party, I am absolutely certain that the people of Canada are not concerned about whether the Conservatives had a higher rate of unemployment than the Liberals. They are concerned about the way our country is drifting at the moment. They are reminded of the slogan of the leader of the Conservative party in 1958—the great vision of the north which turned into a blackout.

An hon. Member: You had no vision.

Mr. Gilbert: In 1968 we heard the slogan of the just society, which is turning into an unjust society. It is a good thing I did not have any vision or we would probably be as badly off as was the Conservative government in 1962. I think the people of Canada are concerned with the principles set forth by the Economic Council of Canada. The council said that for Canada to have any sizeable growth required three things: full employment, with unemployment never exceeding 3 per cent, full productivity and price stability.

I wish to deal briefly with the question of full employment. What do we find today? An absolute failure with regard to the methods employed by the government. When we translate the unemployment figure of 6.7 per cent, we find it involves 542,000 people. It involves not only the workmen but the families they support. I am not the least bit interested in hearing whether the province of Nova Scotia is better off than the provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island or Newfoundland. I am not interested in hearing that because there is a Conservative government in Nova Scotia the unemployment rate is reduced in that province. We are all Canadians, Mr. Speaker.

As far as the members of the New Democratic Party are concerned, there is a 10 per cent rate of unemployment in the Maritimes, a 10 per cent rate of unemployment in Quebec and an over-all 6.7 per cent affecting all Canadians. When I think of the ineffective manpower and retraining policies of this government, when I take into consideration that

43 per cent of the labour force have less than a grade 8 education, and restrictions are imposed with regard to training these men such as the requirement of a grade 10 education to qualify for a technical course, or that young workers must be in the labour market for three years, or the absence of any training for Indians and Eskimos, the shortage of living allowances with regard to the retraining of these workers, the administrative chaos and the lack of imaginative approaches with regard to retraining in the Department of Manpower, I realize that the government is bankrupt socially and morally in this field.

I wish to direct my remarks to a particular situation in my riding. I refer to the lay-off of 600 employees at Dunlop Tire and the shut-down of that plant in my area. On March 6, which we call Black Friday, the company called the employees together and announced that they were going to shut down their plant. Prior to that, officials of the company met with provincial government officials at Queen's Park and federal government officials in Ottawa to advise them that they were closing down the plant. The members of those governments were sworn to secrecy with regard to the statement. On March 6 the employees, for the first time, received the news with stunned silence. On March 11 the employees demonstrated at Queen's Park. On March 12 they met with the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) and the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. MacEachen). Although they received a great deal of sympathy, they did not find a solution. They were told that this was a provincial problem and all the federal government could do was help them through unemployment insurance or manpower retraining.

All that the employees of Dunlop wanted was the provincial government to make a feasibility study as to whether this industry was dead or alive in Canada. They wanted economists and accountants to get together with government officials to determine the market potential, the price structure, and then determine whether the company should be shut down. Mr. Speaker, the company and the provincial government refused to do that. In fact, telegrams were sent to the Minister of Labour and the provincial minister of trade and development. To this date no reply has been received with regard to any co-operation the officials will give in undertaking a study of the feasibility of continuing this plant.