

The Address—Mr. Pearson

Mr. Speaker: Order. In view of the fact that the rules provide that the hon. member who has the floor has the right to speak, perhaps some of the side remarks could be contained for other occasions, not in this house.

Mr. Pearson: If the Minister of Trade and Commerce (Mr. Hees) and the Minister of Public Works—

Mr. Hees: I have not been saying a thing.

Mr. Pearson: True, the minister has not said a word and I have not said he has, but I am saying that if he and the Minister of Public Works (Mr. Fulton), and other ministers, wish to ascertain a sensible attitude to this question, let them read the statement made by the hon. gentleman's deputy in Vancouver. There is no doubt that Britain's entry into the ECM will confront us with problems in this country. Britain's rejection by the ECM would confront us with greater problems, so the urgent task at the commonwealth meetings in London was not to patch up the old system, not to try to make this choice between the common market and the commonwealth, but to begin a new structure of commonwealth trade within the pattern of a new trading world. Britain can gain political and economic strength by full partnership in Europe while remaining the heart and centre of the commonwealth, but a declining Britain will never mean a stronger commonwealth. There have been few greater challenges to statesmanship than the relationship we should all adopt to these European developments. If that challenge was not met in London, that was due in large part to the negative and shortsighted attitude taken by the Canadian government which over recent years has had nothing constructive to propose and no leadership to give.

Hon. members ask: What would you do? We have put this on the record in the House of Commons ever since 1959. We would have accepted as a desirable objective Great Britain's accession to the European common market and we would have gone to work at once to see how we could have associated ourselves with that move. That could have been done by showing some understanding and sympathy for the United States freer trade initiative and by trying to work with the United States and with the European common market and the United Kingdom so that the benefits of any agreements, through the most favoured nation clause might apply to all our friends as well. We should not be dragging hopefully behind the Kennedy program, which the Prime Minister has now

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discovered, or throwing road blocks in the way of the United Kingdom's desire to move across the channel.

There is, of course, a very important connection between trade and jobs, and the most important need of the Canadian people at the present time is jobs. The most important task before any parliament is to find employment for the Canadian people. We have heard a great deal of complacent talk from this government about employment. This complacency reached its peak, of course, just before June 18. On June 14 the Prime Minister claimed in that famous television broadcast:

Full employment is now about to take place.

This was in June.

In this month of June we may well reach that long-looked-for goal of virtual full employment. It will certainly be achieved, as I see it, in July or August.

Mr. Speaker, we now have the figures to set beside the Prime Minister's vision. Unemployment in June: 301,000. That is not bad, and I am glad to say that it was an improvement over the previous June. It was not as bad as the previous June, because it was then 370,000. But, Mr. Speaker, 301,000 people were out of work even in June. Is that what the Prime Minister means by full employment? Is that his "long-looked-for goal"? Will he tell the Canadian people that his idea of full employment is to have two or almost three times as many people looking for jobs as there used to be before his day? Will he admit that? He had better look up the figures, because he will have to admit it.

An hon. Member: How many were there?

Mr. Pearson: I will put the figures on record, seeing that they are being challenged now across the aisle. Will the Prime Minister admit, when he told the electorate in June that the unemployment problem was "licked", and that we will certainly have full employment in July or August, that he was wrong again in that prediction? In June, Mr. Speaker, it was inconceivable that we would have full employment this year. But this was before the election. Economists can argue about the details, but certainly we do not have full employment when in the summer 4 per cent of our workers do not have jobs. That has been the situation this summer, and according to the government's own statistics it is equivalent to an unemployment level of 6 per cent on the average through the year. In the Liberal years from 1946 to 1957 the average was 3 per cent; and in the summer months it was generally below 2 per cent.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, this wonderful year, this year the Tories are so proud of, except in an electoral sense, is twice as bad for unemployment as an average Liberal