

Supply

backing the winners seems like a good objective for an industrial policy, but Canada's policies over the past years have been directed far more to propping up the losers in troubled or dying industries. Is my hon. friend advocating, either personally or on behalf of whomever he is speaking for today, that we should prop up, assist and support the high technology industries and other industries which are perceptibly emerging as winners and forget or withdraw support for the textile industry which is apparently losing and dwindling in Canadian industry, the automobile industry which is apparently in great difficulty at this point, and the small parts manufacturing industry which is apparently in great difficulty? Is he advocating that type of industrial strategy with that kind of tough choice? In other words, does he agree with the general thesis of the Science Council of Canada?

Mr. Evans: Basically, my response to that would be, no. To my understanding, the Science Council of Canada advocates an industrial strategy in which the Government would select winners and losers, cause the losers to go under and support the winners. While that is very laudable and sounds good—and basically it is what governments have tried to do—we wind up with a strategy which does exactly the opposite because in trying to help the winners someone has to decide. I would rather have the market decide and then have the Government assist society to make the transition. By looking at such things as the compensation system and job security, we would be much better able to help people affected by industrial relocation and dislocation than we are under the current system. Rather than propping up, let us help people, not the companies.

• (1550)

Hon. Michael Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate on the Opposition motion today because it focuses on some very real problems in the country. The motion of the Hon. Member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie) outlines the callous disregard and tragic neglect of the dire economic and social plight of over 2 million Canadians who are unemployed today. Also it expresses concern for those Canadians whose jobs are at risk today.

The motion sets out five steps to restore the social and economic health of Canada, that is, by forging a social and economic national consensus, encouraging job creating investment, establishing a national productivity strategy and rebuilding the confidence of individual Canadians as they look into the future to what the country has in store for them.

The social impact of what is happening today is a very real one for all Members of Parliament. I should like to refer to some letters I have received from constituents who have been very seriously affected by today's slowdown.

The first one is from a fourth year chemical engineering student who indicated that due to the present economic situation it appeared that he would be unable to find suitable employment in Canada. He is looking to pursue his career outside the country. A great sense of loss was expressed in the letter on the part of the young man who devoted 17 years of his life to educate himself and now finds that there is no work.

Another was from the mother of a 16-year old young man who was unable to find employment. She indicated that her son, Joseph, wanted to work, that he would work at anything, that he just wanted to be working. She said that he haunted Manpower offices and scoured every available newspaper but that each time the answer was the same; "We will have to let you know". Also she indicated that she was worried about her son, that he might be on the borderline of crime. This lady has a great sense of frustration and concern because her son desperately wants to find work but is unable to do so. That last letter was from a young man who began his first post-secondary job a few months back and three months later was laid off. He has now found a job but it took him 3.5 months to find it. Upon reading the letter the sense of cynicism and despair is very clear about the way things are going. It is not only indicative of the situation with which he is faced, because he found a job, but of a number of his friends who have been unable to find work.

Also I should like to refer to a very poignant experience about a lady who came to Canada from Poland 17 years ago. She had worked diligently, not in a high-paying job, at something which was able to give her a means on which to get by and have a roof over her head. She was able to save and buy her own home, but for the past nine months she has been unable to find work. She has looked everywhere. She said something to me which was very important. She said that she came from Poland to Canada because she wanted to be independent and to have that sense of self-reliance that she could control her own destiny, own her own home and not have to rely upon Government. Now she desperately wants to find a job so that she can have self-reliance, and she cannot find it. She thinks she will have to turn to the Government. She does not want to do that. She does not want to lose her independence which was her primary objective in coming to Canada 17 years ago.

All Members of Parliament are experiencing these same things. For this reason we have to take seriously the intent and the direction of the motion before the House. It is imperative that Government Ministers listen carefully. Also it is imperative that those who are not present today read carefully the speeches that have been made. I think a very clear consensus has developed in the speeches I heard, and I think I will contribute to that consensus in some of my remarks.

Let me look at what has happened over the past little while, the experience to date and the outlook over the next few months. We need only look at the OECD economic outlook for Canada. It does not hold a very promising future for Canada over the next 12 months. It predicted marginal GNP growth, increased unemployment, a flat consumer market and unfavourable business fixed investment. Also it indicated that it appeared unlikely that a significant recovery in activity would occur during the projection period. The prospects are for some further fall in the volume of consumer outlays as continuing high unemployment will militate against a significant reduction in the level of savings. People are saving their money