

Economic Conditions

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: Yesterday in the House I referred to a survey made by *The Calgary Herald* in which it was reported that some 376 Canadian drilling rigs will move to the United States. That will lead to at least 22,500 Canadians losing the jobs they already have in Canada. It will lead also to a dramatic reduction in exploration. Already 60 such rigs have moved, or are moving, to the United States. It is not easy for those Canadian companies to decide to pull up their roots and move away from their future in Canada. It will be much less easy for them to come back once they have left.

In Saskatchewan, Hudson's Bay Oil and Gas Company have suspended their 1981 drilling plans in the Lloydminster heavy oil pool. The company had planned to spend \$50 million drilling 300 wells, and half of its Lloydminster workers will be laid off. There is no representative of Lloydminster, or from anywhere in Saskatchewan, of the government side. But what is happening to Saskatchewan today as a result of these policies could happen to Cape Breton tomorrow, to Kitchener the day after that or to any community in Quebec the day after that, because we are setting in train now a series of policies which will cause deep and continuing economic damage to this country.

A typical oil rig, while assembled in Edmonton, contains switchgear—the small motors and electrically powered gadgets that help convert the various functions of a rig—which comes from Brantford, compressors from Stratford, steel from Welland, Sault Ste. Marie or Hamilton, and generators which come from Peterborough. In the rubber industry of southern Ontario alone, 300 or 400 jobs will be lost over the next year alone as a direct result of the dramatic decline in oil exploration.

The oil industry is one of the major purchasers of heavy trucks, trucks that are made in Ste. Thérèse and Windsor. When the oil industry shuts down or winds down, so do jobs for Canadians on the assembly line in Ste. Thérèse and on the assembly line in Windsor. As a result of this government's policies jobs which should be going to Canadians are going to people who live in the United States of America. Well, that is not Canadian policy. That is not a sensible policy. That is a policy which denies a Canadian future.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: There is one point I would like to make here with respect to some Liberal members here who have to support what the cabinet does, even though they are not part of it. This economic disaster, this social disaster, this energy disaster which this government has brought in, is not the exclusive responsibility of the people who sit on the ministerial benches. Every Liberal backbencher here, every Liberal member of Parliament who gives his or her support to this kind of policy will have to go home and answer to the low-income Canadians who are denied an energy tax credit. They will have to go home and answer to the rubber workers or to the other citizens thrown out of work by this government's policies—their policies which deliberately throw Canadians out of work. Mr.

Speaker, that is an absolutely unacceptable policy for any government. It is absolutely irresponsible for any member of Parliament to blindly, blithely accept and support that kind of policy, betraying the interests of the men and women across this country who sent those Liberal members of Parliament to this House.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Mr. Clark: Has the minister, who comes from an area which has known human sufferings as a result of financial difficulties, become so unrealistic that he has forgotten how real is human suffering? According to the data which he has provided, 250,000 Canadians will soon be added to the number of unemployed. Those individuals and their families will pay 61 per cent of their income for a very simple house if they get the maximum unemployment insurance benefits. What will they do if they have other payments to meet, if they have children to feed and clothe or if a member of their family becomes ill? The minister knows what happens. Those Canadians will go bankrupt or will be faced with financial problems for several years to come.

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister knows that the poorest Canadians, the 20 per cent at the bottom of the income scale, spend 83 per cent of their income on the bare necessities of food, clothing and shelter. Those are the Canadians the Prime Minister tells to switch their priorities. Switch their priorities to what, Mr. Speaker? Perhaps the Minister of Finance can tell us what he wants the poor to switch their priorities to. When the Prime Minister comes down from the swank portions of Outremont and tells the poor to budget better, perhaps the Minister of Finance can explain to those Canadians who are out of work or who face the prospect of being out of work just what they can economize on when they have to pay higher fuel costs, higher food costs and other increased costs about which this government cares nothing at all.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Clark: The government says there is no crisis. Well, perhaps there is no crisis for him or his colleagues. Not yet, anyway. But has he talked to the 159 workers laid off at Caravelle Carpets in Cornwall, represented inadequately by the Minister of State for Trade (Mr. Lumley)? Has he talked to the 80 employees of Crowe Forestry of Cambridge? Has he talked to the 227 workers at Montrose Mills in Granby? Has he talked to any of them, individual Canadians with families, with lives of their own, who have been let go during this past month alone? Surely the minister, if he has no economic answers for the country, if he has no willingness to come to grips with the need to set an economic policy which will build for the future of Canada, should at least find some compassion for those Canadians who face a bitter Christmas because they have been abandoned by their government.