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it is responding with its investment dollars and creating jobs as it does so.

There are other statistics as well. Manpower Temporary Services say that there is an encouraging improvement in the outlook for job openings in the second quarter and that that optimism is shared by employers right across the country.

Canadians made a very important change on September 4. They made a change that brought a fundamental improvement to the national outlook. A recent survey showed that Canadians expressed confidence in the handling of unemployment now relative to what they were saying a year earlier. The unemployment rate has gone down from 11.6 per cent to 11 per cent. That is progress. In fact, 84,000 jobs have been created since September. We can do better than that, we should do better than that, but it is a good start.

We have made a good start as well at controlling inflation. We are doing better than the United States in that area. We are moving in a positive direction. There have been no miracles but there has been solid evidence of growth and an improvement in confidence. We need more but we have made satisfactory progress. Canadians are too realistic to expect miracles or to expect a quick fix to happen overnight. However, they know that the fundamental problems are being addressed and that we are dealing with those problems we inherited.

Let us look at the real world. Economists have noted that consumer borrowing has been increasing strongly in recent months. That shows confidence in the future. Canadians are talking with their actions. What consumers are actually doing is indicated by how much money they are borrowing and where it is being spent. Retail sales were 12 per cent higher in January than they were a year earlier. That is a very respectable increase even after the effects of inflation are taken into account.

There is no doom and gloom out there, Mr. Speaker. The doom and gloom is right here with Members opposite. They are walking around with a little cloud over their heads. They do not want to come out from under that cloud. They do not want to face the real world.

I would like to touch on some of the criticisms that have been made by some Hon. Members regarding the consensus-building process. I do not understand it. I simply do not understand why Members opposite say that this is a waste of time. Hon. Members should have listened to Prime Minister Hawke, the head of the Australian Labour Party, because he shares some of the political viewpoints of the two opposition Parties. Surely his words demonstrate the importance of consensus. His message to us was that consultation leads to better understanding, better understanding leads to more co-operation and more co-operation clearly leads to economic growth. That is an excellent example from another country, a country not dissimilar to Canada, demonstrating that we are on the right track in moving toward a great degree of consensus.

I do not understand why Members opposite are so negative. I say they are out of touch with the Canadian people. Only last week some Members from across the floor were suggesting that the Government tell delegates to the National Economic

Conference to go home. They mocked the Government and said that the Government had already made up its mind. I indicated very clearly by saying that the Budget would be like that we have not made up our minds but are listening and are open to the good suggestions that are coming forward.

I would like to touch on the consensus that was reached at the National Economic Conference last weekend. Consensus was reached on the importance of the problems of unemployment, interest rates and the deficit but consensus was also reached that we must be very sensitive to the regional considerations and to the impact of our actions on the handicapped, youth, native people and workers. We must be careful that we do not affect workers unduly by the decisions that we might make when dealing with the deficit. There was not a full consensus on this point, but a number of people from the labour side as well from other communities said to us that the deficit is a problem with which we must deal because it is too high. They said that they might have some different priorities but that it is a problem with which we must deal.

Training and retraining should receive top consideration by the Government in order to deal with the effects of technological change. We talked about some of the ways in which we could do this. Business representatives agreed that business should be prepared to pull back from the public trough. That was stated very clearly by business representatives. Government, labour and management all agreed that we must co-ordinate our efforts in dealing with technological changes and their effect on people and people's ability to adapt to technological change. Only through consultation will we be able to address that problem in a satisfactory way. There was full agreement that we must look carefully at access to capital by small business, the visible minorities and women. We must be willing to discuss incentives within this context.

I am sure that it is difficult for Hon. Members to appreciate that the Government is not trying to fool anyone. We have placed our agenda on the table. It is there for all to see. That is why we are getting such a good response on this consultative effort. People know what we want to address and they are coming to us with a great many very useful ideas. The National Economic Conference was the most comprehensive assembly of Canadians ever to discuss with a national Government the problems which we all face. Very positive attitudes and contributions came forward from all participants.

● (1230)

Canadians are not confused by what the Government is doing. They are insisting that they want to be a part of the process. Not only are they telling the Government that they want that, but they are showing it by their actions and the clear confidence which they are expressing in this Government. This Party has the confidence of Canadians. Canadians have understood the message that the Prime Minister sent to them. Canadians have said that we must work together to find ways. This Government has pledged to listen, discuss and plan with