

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

people who would be employed this coming winter as the result of the proposals made by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) two weeks ago for dealing with the very heavy unemployment which we are facing. The Prime Minister, in his characteristic way, answered with one word, "No." I was not the least satisfied with that answer.

One cannot help realizing how serious the situation will be this coming winter. In September of this year, the last month for which figures are available, there were 434,000 people unemployed. That represents 7.1 per cent of the labour force, calculated on a seasonally adjusted rate. In September, 1967, the last September before this Prime Minister and the government were elected to run the country, there were 219,000 people unemployed. The seasonally adjusted rate was 4.1 per cent.

• (10:00 p.m.)

Ever since the Prime Minister and this government were elected, the rate of unemployment has risen sharply. This year, month by month the rate of unemployment is running approximately 10 per cent higher than the same period last year. In February, 1971, the worst month for unemployment, there were 675,000 people unemployed. A rough calculation of adding 10 per cent, which is a very conservative estimate because it does not take into account the American economic measures announced and instituted by President Nixon, indicates that approximately 750,000 people will be unemployed. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) estimated that the effects of the Nixon economics, if implemented for a full year, will add 90,000 to the number of unemployed in Canada. If one takes half of that for February of this year, you get another 50,000 people unemployed. As I said on another occasion, the estimate I give is not one which I calculated; it is an estimate prepared by one of the most eminent economists in this country. We have a potential unemployment this February of 800,000 people.

The government announced a program of public works at the federal level through the provinces, municipalities and volunteer organizations. It announced it will spend between \$450 million and \$500 million. A few days ago the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) pointed out that \$10 million is to be spent on upgrading agricultural exhibition buildings. He estimated that 1,000 jobs will be provided through the expenditure of that \$10 million. In other words, the Minister of Agriculture estimated it will cost \$10,000 to produce one job. By using the same calculation for the \$450 million to \$500 million which the government proposes to spend this winter, 45,000 to 50,000 jobs will be created. That is not good enough. We will still be left with 700,000 or more people unemployed this coming winter.

The Prime Minister has said on many occasions that the situation is getting better, the economy is improving and the rate of unemployment will be following, if not today, tomorrow, next week or next month. The people of Canada have a right to demand that the Prime Minister and the government say how many jobs will be produced this winter as a result of the program announced by the Minister of Finance, and how many unemployed there will be next winter. I know that economists in the Department of Manpower and Immigration, the Department of Labour and the Department of Finance have made these calculations. The Prime Minister and the government not

[Mr. Orlikow.]

only have a responsibility but a duty to tell the people of Canada what kind of winter they face this year with regard to unemployment.

Mr. J. A. Jerome (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member well knows, predictions in any precise terms of the number of jobs created by a given program cannot be made with any degree of certainty. It is always possible, of course, to predict a certain rise or fall in employment in very general terms. Indeed, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) in his presentation on October 14 indicated that, as he had forecast, there are now some 200,000 more jobs in the economy than there were a year ago.

The design of the current program is to stimulate employment opportunities for the great many new entrants into the labour force and, wherever possible, to protect from lay-offs those who are currently at work. Much of the current program involves tax cuts which are designed to increase consumer spending, thereby increasing the demand for goods and services. But how is it possible to predict accurately the number of people who will be protected from lay-offs as a result of these measures?

Similarly, with the balance of the program consisting of loans and grants to provinces, municipalities and associations, as well as massive housing construction programs and other programs associated with residential construction, the final number of jobs created no longer rests entirely with the government but, rather, depends upon the response of those to whom these programs are directed. There is, in addition, the multiplier effect of increased consumer spending and the indirect effect created thereby, because when the government spends sums of money, money is also enticed out of the savings repositories of associations, municipalities and individuals. Thus, how can we fairly delineate the exact amount of government responsibility for all these increased activities?

Accordingly, while the government has every expectation that the jobs stimulus of this program will be very dramatic, and while it may be possible later to ascribe a fairly exact ratio of jobs created or saved to dollars spent, it is regrettably impossible at this moment in time to give an accurate answer to the kind of question put forward by the hon. member.

[Translation]

ATOMIC ENERGY—RESUMPTION OF STUDY OF POSSIBLE ESTABLISHMENT OF HEAVY WATER PLANT AT MONTMAGNY

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, tonight I should like to revert to a matter which I raised in a question I asked to the hon. Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene) on October 19, 1971, that is the possibility of establishing a heavy water plant in Montmagny.

In my question, I referred to the year 1966, but *Hansard*, by mistake, mentioned the year 1970. However, the year in question is actually 1966. My question appeared on the Order Paper in 1969.

Now, I have received on that matter a letter from the Montmagny Textile Union, which was sent in September. The letter reads as follows: