

*Alleged Failure of Employment Policies*

Thousands of Canadians voted for a party which would be led by this Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), in the expectation that it would help bring about meaningful social and economic reform. What we have seen, what Canadians from one coast to the other have seen, is a government which has demonstrated not moral and intellectual innovation and concern but rather moral and intellectual bankruptcy.

In a democratic society, people have legitimate expectations that their government will be concerned with the improvement of the spiritual and material conditions of the majority particularly of the poor. However, the government has demonstrated a complete incapacity—to put things in the best light—or callous indifference—to use the most extreme terms—concerning this responsibility.

In the time available to me, I should like to demonstrate this contention by referring to three areas. The first concerns the general economic policy of the government; the second, its manpower policies, which I maintain are discriminatory and ineffective, and, the third, its labour relations with its own employees. Others in this party will, later in the debate, enlarge on these points.

Let me first of all say something about the general economic policy of the government. As all economists in the western world know, there are two general approaches to managing the economy of an industrial nation. We can either concern ourselves with maintaining price stability or we can commit ourselves to a policy of full employment. In Canada and the United States, the prime concern of governments has been with price stability. The result is that we have experienced a significantly higher level of unemployment in every year since the war than countries in western Europe which have chosen the alternative policy, namely, the creation of conditions of full employment. I refer to the writings of Mr. John Deutsch, former head of the Economic Council of Canada. In a recent article he said just what I have said.

There are ethical and moral choices which can be made. Governments are not bound by deterministic happenings in our society. This government has consistently opted in favour of price stability, though this has resulted in high rates of unemployment, 5 per cent as against 1½ per cent in a country like Sweden.

• (12.10 p.m.)

We are now faced with the morally reprehensible highest level of unemployment in five

years. Let me begin at the lowest figure, that of Ontario, which is 4.5 per cent, far exceeding the level that would be tolerated by any government in western Europe. The prairie provinces have 5.3 per cent unemployment; British Columbia 6.7 per cent, Quebec 8.7 per cent, the Atlantic provinces 11 per cent, and in Newfoundland the fantastically and tragically high rate of possibly 22 per cent. The national average of 6.5 per cent is, to repeat, the highest level in five years.

Of particular significance in these figures is the one for the youth category, the young members of the labouring force, the rate of unemployment being some 13.5 per cent. This is the most rapidly growing sector of our unemployed and the rate is bound to increase, I suggest, after June when more students come on to the labour market.

The meaning of this condition is callously disregarded by the government. Unemployment means a sad life for those affected. It means the absence of a sense of satisfaction that a man or woman obtains from contributing his share of labour to society. It also means, of course, a serious lack of income, thus affecting the well-being of his dependants. This means, in turn, a necessary decline in the sense of happiness or well-being of the family and its environment. This is a situation that cannot be cynically dismissed. It should not be regarded simply as one little statistic with which we have to live. The point is that other governments in the world do not tolerate this kind of unemployment rate. This government does.

I think that it is now being seen that there is moral inadequacy on the part of the government, a moral bankruptcy. This is being seen by all, I suggest, but the most hackneyed of Liberal partisans. But what is not so readily seen is the intellectual bankruptcy that has gone with this. Even if one were to be primarily concerned with inflation, the diagnosis of the present government is profoundly wrong. We are not in an inflationary period which has resulted from the under production of goods confronted with an excessive demand.

That was the condition in the early 1950's. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) referred to this fact in his speech a short time ago and he tried to draw a parallel with the present. The fact is that today we have a surplus of goods. One has only to come to my constituency to see the number of automobiles there are around. The same point can be made in many ridings in this country. There