

Last week a group of prominent Canadian church leaders, led by Archbishop Ted Scott of the Anglican Church, visited the Lubicon Lake area and confirmed findings of human rights violations. Meanwhile, the Liberal Government in Ottawa does nothing, although it has constitutional responsibility for Indian people. When Indian people are under threat from provincial Governments or large companies, the federal Government cannot stand by. We call on the federal Government to live up to its responsibilities and defend the rights of the Lubicon people.

Mr. Speaker: The Hon. Member's time has expired.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

LABOUR CONDITIONS

INCREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Finance. Last month, when the unemployment figures stood at 11.3 per cent, the Minister said, as reported at page 2368 of *Hansard*:

I suggest that he should wait for the Statistics Canada figures for next month. He might be surprised. What will he say if unemployment comes down next month?

Today we have had the news, and it is all bad. Housing starts are down by 18 per cent, the dollar is down, interest rates are up, and unemployment has risen another full point. What does the Minister say to that?

An Hon. Member: Wait until next month.

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am obviously disappointed by the figures on unemployment this morning. However, I want to point out to the Hon. Member that all the signs in the economy show that the economy is keeping a strong rate of growth.

He refers to housing, for instance. I invite him to look at the figures for the first quarter, the first three months, because he will find that they are 10 per cent over what they were in the last quarter of 1983.

As I said, the results on the unemployment side are a disappointment to me and, I am sure, to a lot of Canadians. But again, if we look at the figures in detail we see that full time employment has not gone down, which means that the basic trend of the economy is indeed toward growth and consolidation of the recovery that we have known, and that all the losses in employment have taken place in part time work.

I expect that the situation in the economy will continue to improve in terms of growth.

We have had good figures in terms of productivity improvement in Canada in the last several months, and I expect that

these productivity improvements will show themselves in terms of unemployment reduction in the months to come.

Mr. McGrath: It is incredible how the Minister can ignore the facts. He continues to ignore the facts, because they are that there has been no growth in employment in this country since September, unless he calls two-tenths of a percentage point growth. In terms of full time jobs, we are 349,000 behind the pre recession level. How can he call that growth?

MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): What does the Minister of Finance have to say to the 1.4 million unemployed people out there who have no jobs and who get no hope from the Minister? What does he say to the half million young people who are now going to be joined by thousands of students coming out of universities who will be looking for jobs to finance their education? Will the Minister please be credible for once, if he wants to have any credibility in terms of finding himself a job at the OECD?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member knows that since the depth of the recession we have created 444,000 jobs. Our record in terms of job creation compares very favourably with most other countries. In terms of productivity, I remind my friend also that we have known a very high increase in productivity. For the month of January, the latest statistics on growth in the economy showed a 1.3 per cent increase in Canada, which would indicate a very strong basic growth in the economy in 1984.

● (1120)

As far as students and young people are concerned, the Hon. Member knows that the Government has set aside over \$1.3 billion this year to help young people, to try to alleviate the problem of unemployment among young people. Part of that money will obviously be allocated specifically and specially to help students during the course of this summer as the academic year terminates. The Minister of Employment and Immigration and the Minister of State for Youth will be able to make appropriate announcements in that regard.

COMPARISON WITH SITUATION IN UNITED STATES

Hon. James A. McGrath (St. John's East): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister. Today U.S. labour force figures were released coincidentally with ours. They show an alarming comparison. For example, the U.S. labour force is up by 0.6 per cent and the Canadian labour force is up by 0.4 per cent. Yet, during the same period, the U.S. unemployment rate dropped 1.4 per cent while ours increased. The U.S. unemployment rate went from 9.2 per cent to 7.8 per cent, while the Canadian unemployment rate continues to increase. Obviously there is something drastically wrong with the economic course which the Minister has set for the country. I will ask him, now before his Budget is in total