

Canadian Economy

satisfied because we are increasing the allowable expenses of employees from \$150 to \$250. However, that is another incentive for employees. We will be increasing exemptions for every taxpayer by 7.2 per cent on January 1. That is included in Bill C-11. In January and February, seven million taxpayers in this land will be allowed a tax cut of \$100—and the opposition is dragging its feet.

Mr. Crosbie: You are giving Doyle \$3.5 million.

Mr. Chrétien: The hon. member for St. John's West (Mr. Crosbie) is dragging in the old political problems he had in his province. He could not stand the heat of being minister of finance there, so he quit. I do not want to be distracted by the hon. member's nonsense, so I will carry on. I would like to speak about the performance of our economy. The post-controls period will be extremely difficult; the results of controls will not be perfect—but we can see that the Canadian position is improving substantially.

Mr. Crosbie: You double-crossed the Canadian public.

Mr. Chrétien: Two years ago our trade balance was nil. Last year we had a favourable trade balance of \$1 billion. This year we have a favourable \$2.4 billion trade balance.

Mr. Crosbie: We have no problems at all?

Mr. Chrétien: We have problems.

Mr. Crosbie: You are one of them.

Mr. Chrétien: There are some people like the hon. member for St. John's West who had to quit their jobs. The hon. member knew he could not stand the heat as minister of finance in his province. The hon. member tried to replace the leader of the Liberal party in Newfoundland. He could not do that, so he tried to replace the leader of the provincial Tory party. He could not do that either, so he gave up.

We have some problems, but I think it is important that we stop the "gloom and doom" mentality. I think we have to speak about the positive elements. I am not running away from our problems. I have said that there are too many unemployed in the land, and we are trying to do whatever we can. The hon. member from St. John's thinks he has all the solutions, but he had no solutions when he was minister of finance in his province.

I think we have to be realistic about the economic situation. There are some positive elements. The controls have reduced the pressure of the compensation factor. Canadian people now realize the folly of trying to take too much out of the economy. The result of taking too much is that price increases are too high. The present voluntary settlements are very much in line with settlements in the United States. That is extremely positive, because in 1974, 1975 and 1976 settlements were too high and we were losing our competitive position. The fact that the Canadian dollar is at a more realistic level at this time is another positive element.

[Mr. Chrétien.]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. I regret to interrupt the hon. minister, but his allotted time has expired. He may continue, however, with unanimous consent. Does the minister have unanimous consent to continue?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Some hon. Members: No.

Mr. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of agreeing to allow the hon. gentleman to carry on, because the last five times I have spoken in this House hon. gentlemen opposite have not done me that courtesy. I have no intention whatsoever of allowing the minister to carry on.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

An hon. Member: You are not a gentleman.

Mr. Crosbie: The Minister of Finance (Mr. Chrétien) is leaving now. He does not want to hear the hard truth. When I watch the Minister of Finance, I ask myself how many ministers of finance can dance on the head of a pin. The present minister is the seventh minister of finance since 1963. We have averaged one every two years since 1963—and the seventh minister is a shambles, just as the other six were. The economy of Canada is in a shamble as a result of their policies. They are a group of shamblers. The best description for the Minister of Finance—who has come back into the chamber—is that he is the sanguine Minister of Finance: nothing bothers him. An 8.3 per cent rate of unemployment does not bother him. An unemployment rate in Newfoundland of over 17 per cent does not bother our friend from Shawinigan: he is sanguine. He is like the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau): he is unperturbed; he is positively not disturbed by the unemployment and economic conditions in Canada and the shambles his government has created. People in Shawinigan may be satisfied, but they are not satisfied anywhere else in Canada.

● (1622)

As we have learned from the remarks of the Minister of Finance, he is unaware and unworried about the country. He is positively uxorious with respect to members of the opposition and people in Canada who dare to be critical of his fumbling way with the economy and of where this government has led us. As an illustration of the government's policy, I should like to refer to a speech made by the Minister of Finance in Calgary on September 13, an excerpt from which was quoted by George Bain in *Ottawa Today* on October 20 as follows:

They (foreigners) know that Canada is riding through the current world economic difficulties in comparatively high fashion.

The people of Canada will be glad to know we are riding along in high fashion. The 29,000 unemployed in Newfoundland, and the hundreds of thousands of other unemployed in Canada, will be glad to know they are going along in high style, according to the minister. The quote continues:

But Canadians do not have the same buoyant feeling . . . Instead we bitch.