

the result of deliberate policy by the government. I agree with that, and it is on that basis that I propose at the end of my remarks to move an amendment to this motion, adding words to it that will underline the responsibility of the government for the unemployment situation. I suggest it is not the result merely of something that is beyond the control of the government; it is the result of the government's deliberate intentions and of policies that have been pursued over the past few years.

Sitting in this august chamber it is easy to forget what the Dominion Bureau of Statistics figures in connection with the frightening rise in unemployment really mean, and to look at them merely as figures. Forgive me if I remind hon. members of this house—not that I think they need reminding, but in order to place our discussion in the proper context—that what we are talking about are hundreds of thousands of human beings. We are talking not only about people who themselves are unemployed but also about people who depend on employment. These unemployment figures represent human tragedy on a large scale. They represent fear, want, hopes dashed and confidence undermined. That is what we are really talking about today. We are not talking merely about a rate of growth that is one percentage figure or another percentage figure. We are not talking about mere figures of 300,000 or 400,000. We are speaking about the immense and continuing suffering, deprivation and spiritual degradation of hundreds of thousands of people as a result of deliberate government policy.

This is why I cannot discuss this subject with any equanimity. This is why I agree entirely that a government, or anybody else for that matter, that is complacent about this kind of situation is guilty of shameful insensitivity. Any member of a group that is responsible for such unconcern who speaks to me today about the just society appears to me to be about as great a hypocrite as I could ever hear or read about.

During the election the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) said that the employment outlook was good. He said that if we were to get high unemployment, he believed that the government would have to prime the economy, but that that would not be appropriate at that time. How high is high, Mr. Speaker? How high does unemployment have to climb before the Minister of Finance considers it serious enough to take action?

#### *Alleged Failure to Reduce Unemployment*

I should like to draw the attention of the house to a recent report in the *Toronto Star* for December 30, a time, we must remember, when unemployment across the country was already 4.6 or 4.7 per cent, seasonally adjusted. The Minister of Finance is reported as having said that unemployment in Canada was then higher than he would like to see it—how kind of him to say that—but that it was not intolerably high.

● (4:10 p.m.)

On behalf of my colleagues and myself, and I am certain I can speak on behalf of every thinking and feeling person in Canada, I say that an unemployment rate that is almost at 5 per cent seasonally adjusted is intolerably high, and that no excuse can be made for it. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Economic Council of Canada has indicated that 3 per cent should be the ceiling for the unemployment rate in Canada. A figure that is almost twice that is surely catastrophic enough to move even the present Minister of Finance. I read a speech of his, Mr. Speaker, and I cite this not because it presents a solution but as an example of the muddy and incomprehensible thinking of a very important Minister of the Crown. I read the text of a speech of the Minister of Finance to the Canadian Club in Toronto. In this speech the minister said, "While unemployment has been higher than we would like, it can now be seen more clearly as a reflection of the rapid growth of the labour force rather than as a result of slow rate of job creation." What in heaven's name does the minister mean by that? Job creation must be related to the size of the labour force. If the size of the labour force increases more jobs have to be created. When this is not done it is a reflection of a low rate of job creation. This is the kind of thinking which has caused our present very serious difficulty.

This government has deliberately pursued policies to increase unemployment and has pursued these policies on the basis of an outdated and false concept; that is, in order to avoid inflation if you increase unemployment, you will accomplish your objective.

We in this corner of the house have said on many occasions that this is a false theory; that in effect prices are no longer subject to the ordinary rules of the market. You cannot control prices in the country by increasing unemployment and hope that a decrease of aggregate demand will serve the purpose of lowering prices. This is simply not relevant to a modern economy and that is why this country now has the worst of both worlds. It has