

Economic Conditions

There are over one million people in Canada who are unemployed. Lay-offs are occurring at the rate of 1,000 a day. We have a Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), however, who tells pensioners to change their priorities if they wish to eat properly. One of my responsibilities in this House has to do with the Atlantic provinces. I want to state what happened in Atlantic Canada last year and what will happen in the next year.

In Newfoundland, costs November over November for all items were 13.1 per cent higher, and food was 14.8 per cent higher. In New Brunswick, all items were 12.2 per cent higher, and food 15.6 per cent higher. In Nova Scotia, all items were 12.3 per cent higher, and food in the province of the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) was 16.3 per cent higher. In Prince Edward Island all items were 11.8 per cent higher, and food 12.3 per cent higher.

Unemployment projections for next year in those provinces are as follows: Newfoundland, 17.4 per cent; Nova Scotia, 11.6 per cent; New Brunswick, 12.8 per cent, and Prince Edward Island 10.7 per cent. How can we expect those provinces to rebuild their economies with that much unemployment and with those increases in the cost of food?

When you destroy the ability of the people of that region to do more than pay for their basic foodstuffs, you also destroy that region's economic capacity to build on its service industries. People do not have the funds to buy other items which could be produced in those provinces. You literally destroy their opportunities to improve their economic performance in that area of Canada.

I could go on and talk about the extra costs of living in the north, high unemployment among native people, housing problems for native people and the youth who suffer so much under the present economic circumstances of Canada. However, others have spoken about that. I could go on all day and give statistics about how bad the economic situation is in the country. However, after dealing with one or two more statistics, I want to talk about what is happening to people.

I would like to begin by referring to *Hansard* for October 25, 1979, where the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) is quoted as saying that with an 11.5 per cent mortgage, "Canadians are being crucified". He went on to say that with a 14.5 per cent mortgage, "they are being drawn and quartered". We now have mortgage rates ranging between 16 and 20 per cent. That explains where the Minister of Employment and Immigration is getting his eunuchs from. He is creating with his own economic policy, and the government of which he is a part, that situation in Canada.

People throughout this country cannot afford to buy homes. Some young people with two incomes cannot qualify for mortgages in this country. That not only affects people's visions about what their life will be like, but also affects the construction industry, the lumber industry, and results in many more lay-offs in Canada.

I wish to refer to other quotes of the Minister of Employment and Immigration. I refer to his "Special Parliamentary Report". On the front page it states "Promises Fulfilled".

Whatever happened to the promise of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gray) to resign if interest rates went up? Does he not have any credibility, sense of honesty, or integrity? He made a specific promise, not only to members of this House, but to all Canadians. He made that promise as a spokesman for the Liberal party. It is a broken promise. When Liberal ministers put out propaganda talking about promises fulfilled, they should make sure their promises are fulfilled. Therefore, the minister should resign.

It is interesting how the government has propaganda inside the handout of the employment minister which talks about our cheap prices for food. It states "Canadians have the least expensive food". There is a beautiful little chart which shows that Canadians pay \$55.58 for a basket of 21 items. That is in U.S. dollars, which means it is much higher in Canadian funds. As proof of how cheap it is to buy goods in Canada, a number of countries are listed. The last country listed is Japan where that same basket of 21 items costs \$135.10. As my colleague said, it costs more for those 21 items in Japan because the Japanese do not eat the same foods.

If those are statistics and that is the information ministers of the Crown send to Canadians to prove that the Canadian economic situation is great, no wonder we in this House are very skeptical. We cannot believe a minister who passes out that kind of information to his constituents.

The Minister of Finance says there is no problem, there is no crisis in Canada. We do not want to delay the debate with statistics about a crisis. We have already proved in the debate which took place for the last 15 hours that there is a crisis in Canada. Look at the real crisis, the crisis among people. I wish to quote from a work by the National Council on Welfare. I quote:

Anything that widens the gap between income and need—the loss of a breadwinner's wages because of unemployment or illness, escalating rent, sudden rises in fuel and grocery costs, any unexpected and unavoidable expense—can plunge a poor family into crisis.

That is what we are talking about in this debate, increasing costs of fuel and food, unemployment, escalating rents plunging families into a crisis. This is not just a crisis, an emotional crisis of being laid off and not being the breadwinner, this is a crisis a whole family feels. This is a crisis of social costs resulting from bad economic management by the government.

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Let us consider the unemployment statistics. Unemployment is a statistic, but unemployment is also a human fact; something which is felt by every person who is laid off, each person who cannot get his or her first job or his or her second job. That same report refers to a recent report of 100 families with violent situations. It reports that 80 per cent of wifebeaters are unemployed Canadians. That report states that 80 per cent of wifebeaters—I cannot say spousebeaters, wifebeaters—are people who are unemployed. That is a social problem resulting from the economic climate we have in this country. The sooner the government realizes that, and the sooner the government understands that we are not talking about statistics but about people then, hopefully, it will act.