

AFTER RECESS

The House resume at 8 p.m.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

CONTINUATION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed, from Monday, February 28, consideration of the motion of Mr. Ross Whicher for an Address to His Excellency the Governor General in reply to his speech at the opening of the session.

[Translation]

Mr. Roland Godin (Portneuf): Mr. Speaker, in the speech he delivered on February 18 last, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), who obviously wished to defend his government subjected to attacks from all sides, did not spare any effort to make us believe that all is well in Canada. He even quoted some statistics to show that Canada had created more jobs than seven European countries put together: France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Everybody will agree with me that it is relatively easy to create thousands of jobs when thousands of workers are unemployed. But in countries with a low rate of unemployment and a small labour force, the task becomes more difficult for manufacturers.

On page 10 of the Economic Council of Canada report entitled "Performance in Perspective 1971" there is a comparative table of unemployment rates in certain OECD countries. Of all the countries mentioned, Canada has the highest rate.

For instance, in West Germany, the unemployment rate is only 0.6 per cent, whereas it is 5.9 in Canada—those are the figures for 1970.

In Japan, the unemployment rate is only 1.2 per cent, and in France, 3.3 per cent. Even in Italy, it is only 3.5 per cent, whereas it is 5.9 per cent in Canada.

So when the Prime Minister wants to make comparisons with European countries in the matter of unemployment, he should tell the whole story and quote the statistics which show that the unemployment rate is higher in Canada than in any European country.

In our country the current unemployment rate is increasing among workers of all ages and both sexes. For workers between 25 and 44 years of age, it has gone up from 93,000 in 1965 to 157,000 in 1970. For workers between 45 and 64 years of age, it has risen from 70,000 to 106,000 over the same period. As I said, this phenomenon can be observed in the case of women as well as men.

Despite the Prime Minister's effort, despite the ministers' making presents right, left, and centre in order to create thousands of jobs, the unemployment rate goes on increasing in Canada, for young people between 14 and 24 years of age as well as for workers 25 years old and over. The unemployment rate has been increasing constantly since 1968—the date at which the present government came to power.

In that connection, here are some statistics from "Manpower, December 1971." The publication contains a table indicating the average unemployment for Canadians from 14 to 24 years of age. In 1968, the average was 6 per cent;

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in 1969, it was 5.9 per cent, for 1970, it was 7.7 per cent and for 1971, it was 8.8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, if the increase in the rate of unemployment is higher among young people, it remains that it is generalized. Unemployment is like a cancer undermining the whole Canadian society, and in my opinion, had the prime minister consulted his immediate advisors, it is likely that the whole content of his speech would have been changed. Many ministers of his Cabinet are perfectly aware of the situation.

First here is what the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) said at Jasper on February 1, 1971, as reported by the Canadian Press:

The federal government has agreed to work out a program to deal with unemployment which will probably be very high next winter, stated yesterday the president of the Treasury Board, Mr. C. M. Drury.

As for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Mackasey) he was also forecasting unemployment and, for a wonder, he foresees even more during the next winter.

Mr. Speaker, I was sorry to learn that the Minister of Manpower and Immigration had to be hospitalized. I therefore take this opportunity to wish him an early recovery.

● (2010)

Be that as it may, here is what *Le Devoir* of February 10th last reported with regard to the minister's statement, and I quote:

665,000 unemployed in Canada, 233,000 in Quebec, (that is over 35 per cent of the total number)—and that is not all: the federal Minister of Manpower, Mr. Bryce Mackasey, thought it wise to warn us that the situation would go from bad to worse in the coming months!

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Stormont (Mr. Lamoureux) the Speaker of the House of Commons, member elected under the Liberal ticket in 1965, stated at a public meeting held in his riding that 19 per cent of the workers were unemployed, and we know that his riding is represented in the Ontario legislature by a Conservative minister. In spite of that, in the spring of 1971, unemployment in Stormont went up to 19 per cent.

The Prime Minister did try to have the people believe that there was no discontent. I can assure the House that the unemployed workers themselves realize this winter that they are left behind. For those who are the victims of unemployment in Canada at the present time, this is a real tragedy, a situation worse than any other up to this day.

Personally, I spent half the adjournment period—and I presume that most members did likewise—trying to untangle the difficulties involving the Unemployment Insurance Commission. Due to the constantly increasing number of unemployed workers, the officials of the Commission are overwhelmed with work and in spite of their good will and their overtime, the situation remains the same. In my opinion, the worst backlog is with respect to claims covering periods of illness. In addition, the staff dealing with claims is insufficient, and I think that this government should give particular attention to this problem.

Even though the Speech from the Throne is full of optimism, even though the Prime Minister says that every-