

The Canadian Economy

of this country, I suspect will not fool many people at the present time.

What has this government done since 1968?

Mr. Yewchuk: Nothing.

Mr. Mackasey: Since the hon. member came to this House a short time ago, he has constantly shown by his remarks exactly that degree of ignorance with which we on this side of the House stamp him. We will all be waiting for him to make a speech without assistance from any notes prepared for him by his research department. Any piece of legislation that I have introduced and had passed by this House affecting that category of person to whom the hon. member for Yukon sarcastically referred as the man with the lunch pail has had the full support of this government. My colleagues have accepted the philosophy of the legislation in question.

Earlier this evening I listened to the hon. member for Dauphin (Mr. Ritchie) read a speech, and I suppose he is in the right party because I have yet to hear as reactionary a speech from any member of this House in recent months. On the one hand, he was deploring the fact that 7.1 per cent of the labour force was out of work. On the other hand, he was upset because we have provided enlightened legislation, such as the new Unemployment Insurance Act and the new Labour (Standards) Act; and he made a sly remark about the proposed labour bill which provides ways and means of alleviating the insecurity of people who are fearful of being out of work. I suggest he cannot have it both ways.

There is no substitute for jobs, Mr. Speaker. When members of this House and other people outside the House who should know better, such as leading industrialists and others, deplore the fact that people are on welfare and suggest we must cut back on welfare—as the hon. member suggested earlier—then it is time we put an end to the notion that every person in this country who is drawing welfare is slovenly and lazy or would prefer to draw unemployment insurance rather than work. That is not the fact.

The other day the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro), in two good speeches, pointed out that less than 15 per cent of the people drawing welfare in this country are capable of working even if jobs existed. I suggest it is high time we stopped apologizing for the expansion of CAP, for our new unemployment insurance program, and for many other social measures that this government has introduced to the House and had passed since 1968.

I still adhere to the philosophy that people are more important than machines, and I do not apologize to the opposition or to the hon. member for Dauphin for my proposed measure dealing with technological change, which simply means that an employer or an industrialist who intends to introduce technological change to improve his profits should, at the first opportunity, sit down and discuss the effect of this change with the people who will be affected by it. This is just plain decency. It is also time people understood that we no longer have a silent group of workers but well educated people who want jobs. If jobs are not provided by private industry, these people will rise up and make it quite clear that they prefer some

other form of government. I am not talking about a switch to government by the party of the Official Opposition; I am talking about a switch to socialism. Heaven knows, our record right now is nothing to write home about with unemployment at the high rate it is. I admit that because I am honest. But God help us if a socialist party were in power at the present time. This is a fact of life that private enterprise had better understand.

Let me look at the economic situation for a moment. Cash savings in this country are at an all time high. There are more people working than ever before in Canadian history; roughly 94 people out of 100 are earning higher wages than ever before in Canadian history. Add to this the fact that inventories are probably at a record low, that there is ample money in the system, that interest rates have dropped, that there are all kinds of incentives built into the economy to enable private enterprise to encourage expansion. Accelerated depreciation is one of the many incentives contained in the last budget. The recent textiles bill that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) introduced encourages the textile industry to rationalize instead of hiding behind high tariff walls, and to become competitive with other countries that flood this country with textiles. This, Mr. Speaker, is progressive Liberal legislation.

Having said that finally everything is in place, that savings are high, inventories are low, money is in ample abundance at the chartered banks and that interest rates have fallen, why the reluctance on the part of private industry to meet its responsibilities and begin to expand? I suggest there has been a series of events beyond the control of the Minister of Finance. This is why I said at the outset that the Minister of Finance is being made the goat of events that are beyond his control.

Let me give the House a very good example. Last year in the province of Quebec an end was brought to uncertainty in the province by the election of a majority government—never mind which party happened to get that majority. What has happened since then? As the economy was about to take off, last October we had the FLQ crisis.

Mr. Horner: Three budgets in a year.

Mr. Mackasey: And there should be as many as six. This kind of flexibility is not outmoded thinking; it is progressive thinking, something the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner) knows nothing about. It illustrates the ability of the Minister of Finance to adjust to changing economic conditions. He brings in a series of budgets instead of following the old, stereotyped method of presenting one a year. This is something for which hon. members opposite should applaud the minister, not condemn him. Right after the crisis last fall, and again in March, the minister took ways and means of stimulating—

• (11:40 p.m.)

Mr. Woolliams: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mackasey: The hon. member has just arrived from his siesta. He is a fitting example of someone who should not worry about unemployment, considering what a big wheel he is in Alberta and what a wonderful lawyer. If he has something to contribute, let him contribute it, otherwise he should remain silent.