

Government Orders

The government should have been prepared to say that if after nine years of being the government of this country the fact is that unemployment has reached a level of 11.8 per cent, not as calculated by the opposition, but as calculated by the government's own statistical agency, and that level of unemployment is higher than we have had in Canada since 1983, clearly it is doing something wrong.

This government is clearly doing something wrong. We can look around the world at the various other places that the minister mentioned. The United States does not have an 11.8 per cent unemployment rate. In fact, unemployment rates in the U.S. are 7.5 per cent, 7.4 per cent and they are falling.

An hon. member: It calculates them differently.

Mr. Langdon: Based on the same kinds of calculations. Many of the European economists do calculate them somewhat differently but they do so in a way that tends to overstate them compared to our figures.

There are not unemployment rates there that are as sky-high or that have moved as dramatically as in this country. In this country there is a human tragedy. It is a human tragedy that is evident not just in the 11.8 per cent unemployment figures but in the specifics of the unemployment figures.

Take young people for instance. The unemployment rate for young people is 18.4 per cent. How can there be any sense of hope among our young people? How can there be any sense of enthusiasm, of looking forward to the future with excitement and hope in our high schools, our universities, or our community colleges when the unemployment rate among young people is 18.4 per cent?

Look at women. There was a big jump in unemployment last month, and 60,000 of the 84,000 jump was among women. Women are again being hit particularly hard by these increases in unemployment. We can look at what has happened to full-time employment.

Full-time employment fell by one percentage point in this past year. The government would have us believe that jobs have increased in this country, despite the fact that the unemployment rate is up.

An hon. member: There are more people working.

Mr. Langdon: This is true, there are more people working, but more people are working at part-time jobs. More people are doing so involuntarily.

We have a serious and tragic situation in this country, and we can see it not just in the over-all figures. We can see it in community by community figures. We can see it in St. John's, Newfoundland, where the unemployment rate has gone up from 14.5 per cent to 15.2 per cent in the past month. We can see it in Montreal where the unemployment rate has gone up from 12.8 per cent to 13.6 per cent.

We can see it in my home community of Windsor where the unemployment rate is up from 12.8 per cent to 13.6 per cent. In Regina it has increased from 8.4 per cent to 8.9 per cent. Even in Calgary, which used to be thought of as somehow immune from all of these unemployment problems, the rate has increased from 9.8 per cent to 10.7 per cent.

There is a human tragedy taking place across the country. People are losing their jobs and losing their sense of confidence in this country as a consequence.

The Minister of Finance suggested on November 26 that: "I would argue with the hon. member's contention that we are still in a recession". He went on to talk about how there had been this tremendous increase in employment and that there were all kinds of strong positive indicators.

Then reality intruded last Friday with that massive increase in unemployment rates from 11.3 per cent up to 11.8 per cent, higher than anything since 1983. In the face of this human tragedy, this despair among unemployed people, it is perhaps not surprising to see the government talk about cutbacks. It has talked about cutbacks for years. It has talked about bringing the deficit down even though the deficit has gone up.

• (1310)

The reality is that there is something very sick when we have this much unemployment and it is growing and then a government decides deliberately to attack the unemployed. Over 30 per cent of the cuts it made in its budget statement last week were cuts affecting the unemployed in this country, \$2.5 billion according to the government's own economic statement, \$900 million from those who are identified as voluntary quitters, but