

*The Address—Mr. Rodrigue*

making it possible for the people to discuss and evaluate programs. But I realize one thing: very often, when the bills are passed, it is already too late. Other change generated factors have nullified the benefits that legislation could have brought to the population.

Again, this year, in the Speech from the Throne, the third under the government of the just society, the introduction of several white papers is announced.

In my opinion, there is no need to recall that the Canadian people are aware of the problems of the day and that they have always offered their co-operation in the difficult moments of our history. I think that they are ready to take part in the economic expansion of the country. In fact, they have always made a valuable and complete effort in order to fulfill our aims and to grant each Canadian the means to live decently.

However, Mr. Speaker, these people are expecting results that the government wanted but did not obtain. Here is the problem at this time.

While trying to fight inflation, unemployment has been created. Indeed, the country was plunged in an extraordinary unemployment crisis when it should have been possible to fight inflation and maintain the employment level at the same time.

Unemployment statistics released at the end of June 1970 indicated that there were 539,000 unemployed in Canada, 188,000 of them in Quebec. Therefore it seems obvious, in the light of these statistics, that economic restrictions aimed at curbing the rise of the cost of living have had the direct result of increasing the unemployment rate.

It can in fact be seen that since February, when the increase in the cost of living reached its highest rate of 5 per cent, every subsequent regression of the consumer price index has been accompanied by an increase in the number of unemployed.

From May to June, the increase in prices, while still spiraling, showed a relative drop of 1.8 per cent, accompanied by a corresponding increase of 1.5 per cent of the unemployment rate.

Statistics released in July but covering the month of June reveal that, contrary to the normal seasonal trend, the number of unemployed increased by 16,000 from May to June, going from 513,000 to 529,000, and this while the number of jobs was increasing normally, i.e. by 196,000, going from 7,952,000 to 8,148,000. As compared to June 1969, the number of unemployed in Canada in June 1970 increased by 146,000, from 383,000 to 529,000.

The number of jobs, from June 1969 to June 1970, increased by 128,000, from 8,020,000 to 8,148,000.

In the light of these statistics, it is quite clear that we are far from our objectives. We are far from our goal, that is the establishment of a just society. Admittedly there is no quick solution nor a sole remedy to fight unemployment, but this is what makes me ask a question: Has the problem been considered under its true light and is the government seeking or proposing solutions to existing problems?

[Mr. Rodrigue.]

I should like to read a passage from the Throne Speech that, I think, does not reflect the government's action, and I quote:

The Canada of the seventies must continue to be a land for people; a country in which freedom and individualism are cherished and nurtured; a society in which the Government lends its strength to withstand, rather than support the pressures for conformity.

Now, when the government proposes a tax reform as a solution to our economic problems, I say that it is holding on to conformity.

Since the elections prior to the 28th legislature, what true measures have enabled us to create the required number of jobs? Is it Bill C-232? The number of jobs created under this bill did not compensate for the number of jobs suppressed over this period, in spite of the goodwill shown in helping the new industries.

Creating new industries is not as easy as one would believe. Granting new subsidies on paper and announcing the payment of a certain amount is not enough; there are several stages before setting up an industry or ensuring its viability.

I do not question the goodwill of the minister and of all his staff, far from it. But there is a marked difference between wishing to reach a goal and reaching it.

How many jobs have we lost during this same period in footwear, textiles and electronics? In Beauce riding, which I have the honour of representing, the labour force in the footwear industry has dropped from 700 to approximately 400 workers. Similar conditions prevail in the textile industry. Furthermore, the electronics industry which has recently been dealt a heavy blow by the government contracting out satellite ANIK to a foreign manufacturer, happens to be in the same predicament.

If the purpose is to help find new jobs, I am all for setting up new industries. However, once we have them in operation, we should not leave them on their own as we did with the shoe industry, thus forsaking the fruits of 10, 20, 30 or 40 years of efforts on the part of qualified industrialists. These shoe workers have made every sacrifice during the 10 or 20 years that they toiled in order to learn a trade which was to allow them to earn a living for themselves and their families. Unfortunately, they woke up one morning to find out that they were out of a job.

In the statement he made during the debate on the Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) said that the policy of the government had succeeded after a few delays in slowing down the increase in demand, after mid-year. The minister thus acknowledges the fact that with its policy the government has deliberately helped boost unemployment.

In return, is there any action the minister has suggested to offset this loss of wages resulting from the dismissal of hundreds of worker employed in the shoe factories, textile mills, electronic plants, etc., and which represented nothing less than the purchasing power of those same workers?