

Job Creation

million people looking for work, we are spending less than half what we spent ten years ago in direct job-creation programs? How can it be that we are not involved in a direct subsidization of the economy now in an effort to give people an opportunity to work, to earn a living and so meet their commitments? How can it be that all across the country, perhaps with one exception, we find plants closing down? The very heart of British Columbia and its forest industry, about which my colleague will speak later, is facing the bleakest future it has ever faced. Why is it that the fishermen and those who work in the plants on the east coast of this land are faced with unemployment levels they have never seen since the depression?

● (1520)

Why can the government not see the necessity to develop an over-all program to get those people back to work and provide them with assistance? There are people who were unable to earn enough in the summer time, their normal time to do it, to give them an income during the winter to sustain themselves. We hear from the government that it is worried about the situation, but it is not working on a program to assist those people. My colleague will speak about that a little later.

I want to tell the minister that the frustration of trying to come to grips with what it is that motivates this government is almost beyond anyone's capacity to absorb. I have tried over the last few months to think of reasons why the government would sit back and allow this kind of chaos to continue across our land. I have tried to imagine what goes on in the minds of those in the cabinet when they learn of town after town having major industries close down, laying off workers and with people having to move away. I have tried to picture what kind of response the ministers of the Crown might put forward to answer those situations. I must confess that in thinking about a response and then trying to visualize it in terms of the direction the government announced the other day through its budget, I can only come to the conclusion that the government does not understand.

Mr. Young: The government is mindless.

Mr. Deans: The government does not understand that it is dealing with the lives of individuals all across the country. I have come to the conclusion that the government thinks that somehow or another things can be expressed by way of statistics. It seems the government thinks that things are either up a fraction or down a fraction, and fractions are not real people. But people are represented by figures. The government talks about batches of computerized figures that come spewing from government ministries, but in fact there is no background, no depth or substance to that.

There is not a single community that I have visited where I have not run into the human misery people are facing as a result of what can only be described as the callous attitude of this government. I was in Newfoundland two weeks ago and I was in New Brunswick last week. I travel through Ontario regularly. I have seen that human misery everywhere.

The minister, or whoever it may be who wants to answer for all of this, must agree that it makes sense to recognize, first, that the major problem confronting the people of Canada today is the detrimental effect being felt as a result of high interest rates. The reason so many people are being laid off in the auto industry, the appliance manufacturing industry, the building industry, the shoe and apparel industry and the food industry is that friends and neighbours are unable to afford to purchase the products manufactured because of the high interest rate policy being pursued by this government. There is no other single factor which has had such a devastating effect on our economy and on people's lives.

Let me ask hon. members, why are people not buying cars? They are not buying cars because they cannot afford to carry the interest. Why are people not buying houses? They are not buying houses because they cannot afford the payments. Today I listened to people who are about to walk away from their homes. Not only will those people lose their investment, but in some cases they will have to borrow money to pay to the mortgage holder the difference between the level of the mortgage and what the house is worth. These people will be in debt. They will be walking away from their homes. They will have lost their equity and, in addition to that, they will owe at some usurious level of interest \$3,000, \$4,000 or \$5,000. These people will have absolutely nothing to show for their investment.

I suggest that the minister take a look at the number of plant closings and the number of lay-offs that have occurred in this country. One can draw no other conclusion than that there is insanity over interest rates.

If the government were prepared to act on behalf of Canadians using a Canadian monetary and fiscal system to create stability rather than doing what it is doing, which is following blindly in the wake of the United States government, then most of the industries that are now in the process of laying off people would no longer have to lay off people.

I spoke in the House about a week and a half ago regarding the problem in the agricultural industry. I made mention of the fact that the difficulty being faced would only become compounded in the fairly near future. Already that has come to pass. My colleague, the hon. member for Brant (Mr. Blackburn), has been struggling daily in an attempt to get some action from the government regarding the recent announcements by Massey-Ferguson. The reason that Massey-Ferguson is in such difficulty—and I do not think this is any revelation, aside from the fact the company was rather badly managed for some period of time—is because farmers cannot afford to buy the equipment Massey-Ferguson manufactures. The difficulty there is that farmers have to carry the interest rate. The rate of interest is so high that the rate of return to the farmer from the sale of his produce, or from the sale of whatever is his main source of livelihood, is not enough to carry that burden. I pointed out that over the course of the next five years if the industry does not produce it would gradually disappear. In time farmers need to replace machinery, but there would be no Canadian industry to turn to.