

The Canadian Economy

It is regrettable beyond words that this program has been so long delayed. This program is not so imaginative, so ingenious, so unprecedented that it needed all the brains of all the ministers and officials for the last six months to bring it about. This program could have been thought out by knowledgeable people within a period of weeks and been presented much earlier than today. Whatever may happen on election day, for years this government will stand condemned in the eyes of every thinking Canadian as a most ruthless and insensitive government, as a government without the sense of urgency and compassion that every government in a democratic society ought to have.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, after hearing the statement of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson), I expected him to announce, at the end of his speech, general elections for the month of December, because, to my mind, the program he has just announced is an election-oriented one.

Mr. Speaker, this is a program mapped out by economists—as usual—who advised the government to present this House and the general public with new measures intended to create employment in Canada. However, other economists, who probably attended the same universities, advised the leader of the Progressive Conservatives telling him exactly the opposite. As for the economists of the New Democratic Party, they suggested another solution.

Mr. Speaker, I was particularly impressed by two paragraphs in the speech by the Minister of Finance. I would like to quote first the last paragraph:

Mr. Speaker, the economy is strong and growing. The measures I have proposed today are designed to keep it that way.

Now today, hardly a few hours before the minister's statement to the House, I was reading in today's issue of *Le Droit* two articles which I will quote. First one could read the following:

Substantial increase in unemployment rate—

In the same issue, another article deals with a "substantial increase in our exports to the United States."

• (9:20 p.m.)

At noon or yesterday, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) stated: "We are beginning to feel the adverse effects of the 10 per cent surcharge." Today, the newspaper *Le Droit* announced that Canadian exports to the United States have increased, in spite of the American surcharge. Who is lying to Parliament and to the Canadian people? The economists or the government?

Mr. Speaker, I have been surprised to learn today through newspaper reports that our exports have increased in spite of the surcharge and to hear the government say that the surcharge has brought about the increased unemployment rate. Now, the Minister of Finance said the following:

Mr. Speaker, the economy is strong and growing.

Everyone agrees, on the contrary that the economy is not growing and that it is far from strong. I continue to quote:

The measures I have proposed today are designed to keep it that way.

If we keep the economy in its present direction, in one year we shall be worse off than we are now. However, what struck me also were the words of the leader of the opposition (Mr. Stanfield) who has been crying for several weeks: Give us a program. We too had shouted to the Progressive Conservatives who were in power in 1962: Give us a program. They have waited till they were defeated in the elections. Mr. Speaker, nothing concrete has been suggested.

Members of the New Democratic Party are saying the same thing: This will create only about 15,000 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, it is the economists that I hold responsible for the situation in which we are. They are bad advisers, people who are in the clouds. In French, we say they are fogbound, that they do not keep both feet on the ground. And I am asked: Where are the economists of the Social Credit party? Economists of that sort I do not want!

The true economists, Mr. Speaker, are the farmers, the workers, those who know what it means to earn a dollar and to work to build our country instead of creating difficulties as the economists are now doing.

Economists use fine words. The Finance Minister's speech was written by economists. The minister said that economists—

An hon. Member: Name them.

Mr. Caouette: Oh! I can surely name some. The first one would be the Governor of the Bank of Canada. He knows how to impose an interest rate, but he does not know how to distribute credit nor how to create some on the basis of Canadian production statistics.

I quote further:

—it is the government's view that we must do all we reasonably can to give confidence to the economy and induce increased demand for goods and services.

This means that we must spend more. It is interesting for the poor man to be told by the government: My friend, if you want to help get the economy moving again, spend a little more. You have nothing but spend more. How clever! An economist claims that we must spend more. I go on with the quotation:

I remind the House that spending by individuals makes up two-thirds of national income and is therefore the base on which the whole economy rests.

Economists manage to understand that. However, we put up with a system that prevents people from spending because they are without purchasing power. What is done to keep things in order? A little, not very much!

All sorts of task forces are being established: task forces are sent to the Gaspé area to see whether or not there are poor people there; task forces on bilingualism because one hears that French Canadians are responsible for the predicament of English Canadians and vice versa. Both are in a predicament because we do not have the means which would allow our economy to function on a rational and normal basis.

We give away social welfare benefits, old age security pensions and unemployment allowances. The administration of these programs is even costlier. Some needy fami-