

Supply

In January 1994, unemployment in Canada was still hovering around 11.5 per cent and 12.5 per cent in Quebec. This means that there are currently 1.6 million unemployed individuals in Canada, 425,000 of whom are in Quebec. That is unacceptable and honest minds will see this constitutes an emergency, a situation which calls for action, concerted action.

The Liberal Party of Canada apparently understood this at the time—because timing is important here—of drafting the red book presented to the voters during the October 1993 election campaign.

On page 15, you can read the following:

—Canadians are facing hardship: 1.6 million unemployed, millions on welfare, a million children living below the poverty line, record numbers of bankruptcies and plant closings.

Our overriding preoccupation is to offer a government that will help in solving problems and in creating opportunities for Canadians.

“Jobs, jobs, jobs” was their theme. A catch phrase that the people of Canada heard over and over, raising the hopes of many, particularly in Atlantic Canada and Ontario, that the government would finally see to it, as promised, that this hardship be alleviated as mentioned earlier.

At this time, I would like to digress for a moment to deplore the fact that this type of conduct seems to have become contagious. When we see Quebec Premier Daniel Johnson making easy, demagogic promises over which he has no control, there is a common denominator: everywhere we find Liberals who do such things. But have no fear, Mr. Speaker, Quebecers know the score; they are not so naive and will not be fooled; they will be able to judge those who have been in office for nine years and who let this situation deteriorate.

• (1255)

Let us return to the federal scene, which is our immediate concern. What are the Liberals doing now about the commitments they made in their red book? What about it, Mr. Speaker? There is a huge gap between what they say and write and what they do. What has come out of these commitments? A coast-to-coast infrastructure program, in which the government will invest \$2 billion, it seems, with the co-operation of the provincial and municipal governments. How many jobs will we create for the 1,600,000 unemployed? It seems that we will create 45,000 temporary jobs. How many in Quebec for its 425,000 unemployed? Fifteen thousand temporary jobs. You should realize that this is what this government has proposed to meet its commitments: 45,000 temporary jobs, which include not only jobs that are created but also jobs that are maintained.

Of course, there is the Youth Service Corps that is also mentioned in the red book. Here is what it says on page 35: No group faces bleaker economic prospects than Canadians under

25. A Liberal government will help return hope to young Canadians by creating the Canadian Youth Service Corps, which will involve 10,000 young people a year. Mr. Speaker, do you know how many people under 25 were unemployed in Canada last month? There were 428,000 unemployed Canadians under 25, 18 per cent of this age group in the labour force, and this percentage and this number are increasing every month. What do they propose? A youth service corps with a fourfold mandate: community service; discovering and understanding Canada, as my colleague, the member for Lachine—Lac-Saint-Louis, said last week in this House; environmental awareness; and personal growth.

That is very nice, it is well intentioned, but we have seen other Katimaviks, we have seen other schemes dreamed up by senators, but that is not what Canadians and Quebecers need, especially the young people we were just talking about. They need specific job creation measures to meet their needs, to give them back their dignity and, in the case of young people, to give them back their collective future and their personal future.

We do not need projects like Katimavik, but we know how interesting it could be before a referendum to take young people who are vulnerable, especially in Quebec, and give them the proper conditioning to show how much people care about them and how good it is to live in this very democratic country that has no work for them. We know all that can be done with that target group to win some more votes to keep Quebec dependent on Canada.

In these two cases, faced with the same unemployment problem, we see the very serious problem of joblessness affecting the Canadian economy and the people of Canada. All that this government has been able to find so far are half-measures, the infrastructure program and the youth service corps, things that skirt around the issue, that do not really solve the problem but that can be described as a sort of smoke screen, pseudo-solutions for problems that the government seems completely unable to solve, despite its claims.

The same goes for the information highway, a scientific and technological project, but what are they doing about it? What is the action plan? What funds are being allocated to it? All we know is that since October 25, 1993, the minister concerned, the Minister of Industry, recently appointed an advisory committee that will study the information highway, behind closed doors. Meanwhile, our American neighbours apparently have a fairly well-defined action plan, which has the full support of the U.S. Vice President.

• (1300)

Without knowing where we are going, we have appointed an advisory committee that, until further notice, will meet behind closed doors: such is Canada's electronic highway, Mr. Speaker.