

The primary objective of our overseas International Development Assistance Program is poverty alleviation. Mass starvation, low health and education achievements, devastating agricultural practices of four-fifths of the world's poor contribute directly to the degradation of our global environment.

At the earth summit in Rio this year, our Prime Minister preened, and uttered the following: "Sustainable development is not a slogan; it is a prerequisite of our prosperity and a safeguard of our identity. It is also a standard of our responsibility to humanity". This government's standard of responsibility is abysmal.

This Prime Minister has no credibility. This government has no credibility. At a minimum, let the government acknowledge that effective poverty alleviation and sustainable development are achieved through our non-government organizations.

Respond to the Auditor General's concern about our support to institutions such as the World Bank and Regional Development Banks. Assure no cuts to the budget of our NGOs. Put some credibility into the Rio words of our Prime Minister.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

UNEMPLOYMENT

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

On Wednesday afternoon when I was listening to the minister, I kept telling myself, these guys just do not get it. I have the proof today: the big increase in unemployment during the month of November. Every working day 4,000 people are added to the unemployment list in Canada; 4,000 persons for every working day.

To face that problem, the minister came in with a public works program of infrastructure that will create 4,000 jobs, not every day of the month, but over a period of two years. We made suggestions regarding the policies of this government of high interest rates, a high dollar, high deficit, municipal infrastructure program and they said no, no, no, no.

Oral Questions

If the minister and the government feel they are right, why not tell the Prime Minister to do the right thing and go the Canadian people so that they can decide who is right and who is wrong.

Hon. Don Mazankowski (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, quite frankly, that is the only suggestion that I heard as I listened to the debate for the last couple of days: Call an election, no details, borrow some more money and spend a lot of it on infrastructure. On what types of infrastructure? Are there programs ready? Nobody really knows. Just throw money at the thing and then walk away.

Well, that is one suggestion and that is fine. There were some other suggestions which I hope that I can elaborate on.

Indeed, I am troubled by the latest unemployment statistics. I know that all members in the House are troubled by them. I ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition to remember one fact and it is that employment has grown in six of the last seven months. There have been 77,000 new jobs created, 104,000 permanent jobs since August. What we have here is one of the largest increases in the work force on record, some 89,000. While there have been jobs created, the growth of the labour force by 89,000 has caused the unemployment insurance figure to go up in percentage terms.

While I know the figure of 11.8 per cent is very disturbing, what is encouraging is that 13,000 new jobs were created in the month of November.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Chrétien (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I have another question for the Minister of Finance.

In the province of Quebec, the unemployment rate has now reached 14.3 per cent.

• (1120)

In November this meant an increase of 1.6 per cent, the highest increase in the number of unemployed workers in Quebec in a single month since employment statistics were first available.

The Minister of Finance has proposed a fantastic project which consists in repairing two bridges in the Montreal area. That is supposed to deal with the problem.