

The Address—Mr. Pearson

prices, according to the bureau of statistics. The minister should know that. If prices have gone up by more than 2 per cent and the gross national product has gone up only 2 per cent, where is the increase? "Subject to stable prices," he said. Why does the minister continue to make these statements which have no relation to the economic facts?

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Wholly irresponsible.

Mr. Churchill: You ran away from it all last year.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Pearson: Hon. gentlemen opposite can laugh now at the situation I am attempting to describe, but it is one that requires action, not laughter.

As for employment, we propose to give the facts in this regard in so far as they are available to us, and we are not going to be deterred now as we were not deterred last year by the rather childish charges on the part of hon. gentlemen opposite that in doing so we are spreading gloom and doom. We are spreading facts, something we cannot obtain from hon. gentlemen opposite.

Misleading statements have been and are still being made to obscure the seriousness of the picture. If you relied on the speech from the throne for information about this problem you would be justified in concluding that it did not exist. This omission is consistent with the statements and attitudes of members of the government, and fits in with the Prime Minister's extraordinary electoral declaration that as long as he was prime minister no single Canadian would suffer from unemployment.

A year ago, before the election, the country was being told that the situation was much better and soon all would be well. The Prime Minister assured the people of this country last March that in regard to unemployment—and I quote from one of his speeches—"we have gone over the top and are on the way down." But the Minister of Labour in December 1958, speaking in another election—but it was a by-election—could only tell people on that occasion, though he was more optimistic in some of his other references, that by the middle of next year, 1959, "we will be well out of the woods." In other words, last March we were on the way down into the woods, and we are still in the woods and we are waiting for some indication from the government as to how to get out of them.

Here is another before and after contrast in the words of hon. gentlemen opposite, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Labour again

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speaking in Winnipeg on March 5, 1958 said—and I quote from the press account of his speech:

It is our duty to see that no Canadian suffers a single loss of a job this year.

Well, how many Canadians have lost their jobs this year? The minister said the other day—and indeed he repeated the encouragement of some of his colleagues in similar statements; this is certainly quite a retreat from last spring—that the situation would not be worse than last year. If that is the best we can hope from a government which talked so cheerfully a few short months ago about being over the top, and about the crisis of unemployment being over, where is that great billion dollar public works program which, just about a year ago, we were told, was going to put so many people to work. Remember, that was an emergency employment program, not a development program. As such it was put forward to the Canadian people for electoral purposes in eloquent and even evangelistic terms. As such it was criticized by us, as an employment program, as the greatest political hoax in our history, which it was.

Perhaps we will learn in due course exactly how many men have been put to work under this program, especially in the Arctic, by this billion dollar braggadocio. But, said the Minister of Trade and Commerce in his press conference performance a couple of weeks ago:

Employment is up, even if unemployment is up also.

Well, it certainly should be but it is not, at least according to the last figures. This was the question addressed to the minister by the chairman of this panel:

But there are still more Canadians out of jobs, walking the streets today—or at least in November—than there were in November a year ago?

This is taken from a verbatim report of the press conference, and it was taken down as it was reproduced over the air. I continue:

Mr. Churchill: And there were more Canadians employed in November of fifty-eight than in November fifty-seven.

The chairman, who was Mr. Fraser, said:

The number of employed was a bit lower.

Mr. Churchill: Well, we haven't the figures in front of us here and I'll accept your word for it.

We have the figures here, Mr. Speaker, the cold, official figures. During the first eleven months the number of unemployed seeking work, in relation to the total labour force, was on the average 61 per cent higher than in the preceding year, which is pretty close to the forecast of 67 per cent made in the so-called hidden report of last year. What is perhaps even more impressive is the fact