

Economic Conditions

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, as I look back over a reasonably long career in politics, I think it is unfortunate to be making a speech starting at nine minutes to three in the morning.

Mr. McDermid: It is good for the soul.

Mr. Deans: I am not sure it is good for the soul, or any other part of the body for that matter, but as I sat and listened to the debate, looked at the time, and thought of the comments of Madam Speaker this afternoon when she ruled that in fact this was a matter of urgent and pressing necessity, that there is a crisis in Canada and that a debate should take place, it struck me that it really is unfortunate that the government, recognizing that it is true that there is a serious problem confronting this country and the people of this country, could not have made time available to have this discussion during normal hours so that some members of the cabinet might have been able to come into the House and listen to the expressions of concern many members are putting on the record here this evening.

This is a sad day for this country because we have everything available here to make it the greatest country in the world. There is nothing we lack. We have energy in sufficient quantity to meet our needs. We have a manufacturing sector which, if given an opportunity, is capable of providing employment and all the goods and services we need. We can grow our own food. We have an educational system second to none. I cannot think of a single product line we cannot produce here in one way or another, yet here we are debating in the middle of the night the serious economic problems which confront us. I think that is ludicrous, and I do not understand why it is happening. All I know for sure is that what is happening to this country must be stopped. There must be found a way to bring what is happening in this country to an end.

I listened with interest to my Conservative colleague, the hon. member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor). I respect his opinion, although I must say that he overstates his case just a little bit when he makes the point about the reason why Alberta is great at this point in time. I think what he said was that Alberta got going as a result of the free enterprise system.

I think most of us realize that the reason Alberta is enjoying what it is now enjoying is that the OPEC cartel decided to raise the price of oil. Alberta happened to have oil, and it was therefore able to take advantage—to this point not yet unfairly—of the increase for which it quite truthfully did no more than it had been doing prior to the OPEC cartel's coming into being.

Mr. Kilgour: Leave Alberta out of it. That is the government over there.

Mr. Deans: I just want to respond to the point; that is all. The fact is that much of what is said in this regard is simply not factual.

Let us take a look at what has happened. We have a country in which everything is available, yet we see it in disarray. We

look around and find that the problems which confront us are immense. Why are they immense? They are immense because of years of mismanagement. The only people who can be held responsible for that are those people who have been in power over those years. The Liberal party has been the Government of Canada for almost the entire post-war period. It was during that period that the economy should have and could have developed. It was during that period that the ground work could have and should have been laid. It was during that period that we were sold out, and I think that is the fundamental question which confronts us.

Let us take a look at one other problem confronting the country at the moment. Canada's gross national product has registered a 1.7 per cent negative growth in the first half of 1980. Industrial production has declined in four out of the last five quarters and by the end of this month will have declined in five out of the last six quarters. In the second quarter of this year industrial production was down 3.2 per cent from the autumn of 1979. Seventy per cent of the decline in goods producing industries this year has taken place in the manufacturing sector. In the second quarter there was a 9 per cent decline in auto production, a 21 per cent decline in auto parts production, a 3 per cent decline in pulp and paper output, an 18.6 per cent decline in housing starts, a 5.1 per cent decline in durable manufactured goods, and an 11 per cent decline in the construction industry from June of 1979 until the end of the second quarter of 1980.

What we are seeing is a decline in every single sector. When we start looking at that, we begin to realize that with that kind of decline comes unemployment. What have we seen? We have seen some 250,000 people being handed their pink slips and being laid off since last fall. That is between October of last year and October of this year. People have been laid off. Jobs have disappeared. People are no longer able to find jobs and pursue occupations similar to the occupations they had previously. Canada's unemployment is the highest in the industrialized world.

The problem in this country is that for some reason or other we have abdicated political responsibility. The government has failed to recognize that it cannot hand over the levers of economic power to anyone else. Those levers must be manoeuvred, pulled and managed by the government because the government has the only complete view of all sectors, and therefore the government has to co-ordinate the effort, provide the leadership and direction necessary, and encourage and provide people with an incentive to rise above mediocrity and reach a level of acceptance in terms of manufacturing and using our resources.

Let us take a look at what really affects the average individual. We are not talking about economic theory. Economy theory may well be a good topic for discussion in a university lecture room, or it might be nice to have a few ministers of finance get together and chat once in a while about various and sundry theories which may or may not work, but what we are talking about are Canadian families which are unable to make ends meet. We are talking about Canadian