

use it. It is my hope that the people of this country, whether they are in business or in organized labour, will be sufficiently concerned about the lot of the poor, forgotten little Canadian who is not organized, does not work for big business and does not hold shares in any big business that, for a limited time at least, we may reach agreement as to guidelines that are clearly in the interest of the country and of Canadians who are not organized. We must protect such Canadians, and especially those who live in parts of the country where it is difficult to obtain adequate employment. I hope we can put aside charges that are hurled at big business and big labour and come to some consensus that is in everybody's interest.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: I say the government has been grossly derelict in its duty in this regard. I hope it has taken up the challenge, although it has not said clearly that it will. I fervently hope if the government has the temerity and the strength to be prepared to stick its neck out to this extent, that it will obtain the support of business, labour and all people in the country. There is not much risk in doing this for a limited period of time. We must escape from the vicious inflationary spiral. In approaching this matter let us keep in mind the ordinary Canadians, and there are millions of them, who do not belong to large organizations. They will not be protected unless Parliament and the government protects them, and God knows, the government has not done so yet.

Hon. E. J. Benson (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I cannot accept the allegations contained in the motion put forward by the hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman). I offer him my sympathy for not being able to be here today because of a cold. In fact, I suspect that the verbosity of the motion reflects the difficulty my hon. friend had in trying to pick holes in our policy. Our policy is a rounded comprehensive program to curb inflation without creating recession. It involves strong fiscal and monetary measures. It also involves enlisting the support of all Canadians in restraining their demands upon the economy.

• (4:00 p.m.)

The government is charged with deliberately creating unemployment. I will show that while unemployment continues to be a problem, the New Democratic Party is away off

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the mark in the figures they have quoted. The government is charged with causing a recession. I will attempt to show that the economy is still strong and that our policies are flexible enough to ensure that this strength will continue. The government is asked to adopt full employment measures. The fact is, the thrust of our spending programs is directed at overcoming our real unemployment problems in our less developed regions in Canada. We are also asked to have a comprehensive prices and incomes policy. Our policy is comprehensive and we are making progress in arresting inflation.

I was pleased to see that what the NDP meant by a comprehensive prices and incomes policy was really price and wage controls. The hon. member said they would not work on a voluntary basis. We, as a government, do not agree with this. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) said we should impose guidelines.

Mr. Stanfield: I didn't say impose.

Mr. Benson: He said we should set guidelines on prices and wages in the country. What good are guidelines unless one is going to enforce them? We have, through our policy, arrived at guidelines which are acceptable to the people who have to carry them out.

I am tempted to repeat the words of a famous U.S. economist, who, in replying to a questioner said, "Sir, I don't agree with the question." I am tempted to repeat these words because the government is being accused of deliberately creating unemployment up to a crisis level. The facts are that the rate of unemployment, after allowing for normal seasonal movements, has been declining for the past several months. From a seasonally adjusted rate of 5.1 per cent last October, the unemployment rate declined to 5.0 per cent in November, fell further to 4.8 per cent in December and, according to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics in a release issued this morning declined again to 4.5 per cent last month.

Lest one say in this period of the year unemployment always declines, I wish to put on record the seasonally adjusted unemployment rates over the past year. They are as follows: 1969, January 18, 4.4 per cent; February 15, 4.4 per cent; March 22, 4.3 per cent; April 19, 4.5 per cent; May 24, 4.8 per cent; June 21, 4.9 per cent; July 19, 4.7 per cent; August 23, 4.9 per cent; September 20, 5 per cent; October 18, 5.1 per cent; November 15, 5