

*The Economy*

has money to invest, from time to time something must be expected in return if only to pay administration costs.

Mr. Speaker, after listening to the arguments of the mover of this motion, who in fact shows very little interest in it—he has disappeared—I wonder why, after having complained through his motion that the government has done nothing, he did not stay in the House to listen to the learned speeches of the opposition as well as the government. In support of his motion, it is easy, Mr. Speaker, and I think my colleagues understood and understand easily how our colleague for Roberval came to his conclusion; with all the respect I have for him as interim leader of his party, I say he has not changed at all and, worse still, he has failed to understand the policy of the Canadian government.

I say he has not changed at all when he blames the lack of jobs, for the young and part of the Canadian population, on the unions. I am not prepared to say that all is rosy and that everything union leaders do in Canada is fine; to approve the pressures they put upon their members, and to overlook all that is bad or reprehensible in what some union leaders do, but I must say to the leader of the Social Credit Party of Canada that unions were a necessary institution and still are for the protection of the workers.

● (1452)

It is true that at times, unions go to the other extreme, but I submit that we cannot deny workers the right to become members of a trade union. Moreover, the hon. member blames technology. He says the government should blame technology, the mechanization of work. He even said that we should go back to manual work in order to give everyone a job. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member for Roberval is serious, he should remember that society has evolved and that technology creates jobs.

Why have we changed the whole education system in Canada and more particularly in Quebec? The evolution of society and of technology has made it necessary to retrain our fellow citizens who had not had a chance to further their education in order to enable them to adapt to the development of technology. Of course, I have seen technology on the farms of Roberval where they do not use horses only and do not sow as our grandfathers did in the early days. Today with tractors and expensive machinery, and not more in Roberval than elsewhere, who wants to return to the old ways?

But all this machinery, all this advanced technology, Mr. Speaker, gives work to specialized workers, and that is why this government has provided large amounts of money to retrain workers, to ensure their mobility and show them how to work with modern technology. Millions of dollars, if not more, have been made available to Canadians for that purpose. Technology and machinery cannot be blamed entirely for the present unemployment.

Unemployment exists, it is a fact and it is a source of concern to everyone but the government is doing all it can to create jobs in order to alleviate the situation. When we say that the unemployment rate in Canada is 8.4 or 8.6 per cent that in this country a million people are unemployed, we forget to mention how many do work. An unemployment rate of 8.4 per cent, if my figures are correct so far, means that 91.6 per cent of the working population are employed. In March 1978, just two months ago, how many people were employed in Canada? 9,884,000 as compared to 7,767,000 in 1968. Therefore, an employment rate of 91.6 per cent means that 9,085,440 people out of 9,984,000 have a job. It is all very well to say that we have a high rate of unemployment, but we should not forget to mention those who contribute to the economy of our country.

As I said before, we would certainly like everybody to have a job. When the hon. member for Roberval says for example—I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I was looking for another paragraph of his motion. I would like to go over the figures for the last decade. In 1968, we had 7,500,000 workers. Today we have 9,984,000, almost 10,000,000. On the average 250,000 jobs were created each year for the past ten years. In percentage points, the number of people over 15 years of age who have a job, is a now higher than ever. In 1968, it was 54.5 per cent and in March 1978, it was 57 per cent. The rate of participation in the economy is higher than ever: in March 1968, it was 57.1 per cent, today it is 62.4 per cent.

The youth participation rate was also higher in 1968, when it was 57.1 per cent, and in 1978, when it reached 64.1 per cent. Our gross national product has also increased, even though our economy is said to be in a bad way, by 45 per cent in real terms between 1968 and 1977; there was a real increase of 32 per cent in the gross national product per capita during the period 1968-77; the average family income increased by 35 per cent in real terms during the period 1969-76; the average income of Canadians increased by 25 per cent in real terms during the period 1969-76; and the per capita personal available income increased by 118 per cent from 1968 to 1977. Mr. Speaker, these figures show that even though our economy has not been in top shape, it is certainly not the worst among industrial nations.

Today, most Canadians have a much higher standard of living than a few years ago, and to those who are unfortunately unemployed because of the slowdown in the world economy, this government has provided generous assistance so that they can at least enjoy a minimum basic income. Pessimists like those on the other side, not only in the Social Credit party, but also other opposition members, including those of the official opposition, who compare our living conditions with those of the 30s during the depression show that they do not have first-hand knowledge of that period.

**Mr. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich):** Do you?