

Alleged Failure to Reduce Unemployment
fisherman no encouragement. It has given industry no incentive. It is a government which has been sleep-walking since June.

During the election campaign we were told that so much would be done. It has not been done yet. We saw pictures of the Prime Minister diving into a pool. I think it is time he and the cabinet came to the surface and acquainted themselves with the real issues of this nation. Canadians are concerned about jobs; they are concerned about paying bills; they are concerned about educating their children; they are concerned about a future holding a hope of security and progress. They are not concerned about slogans, meaningless schemes and headline hunting gestures. That is why this motion has been put forward and why I naturally support it.

In conclusion, sir, may I refer to *Hansard* for November 21 last year. At that time I referred to a question asked by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) of the Prime Minister. He asked about the rate of unemployment and what steps the government intended to take to combat unemployment in this country. This is the quotation directly from *Hansard* of the Prime Minister's reply:

Mr. Speaker, we had quite lengthy statements on this matter during the budget debate, and we will have a chance to make others on the estimates next week. As you prophesy, I could make a lengthy answer to this question to indicate that this increase in labour force unemployment is due to many factors—

Then he went on to say:

Actually, Mr. Speaker, I have a lengthy answer here.

I am asking today that the Prime Minister follow up what he said in November last year. Let him dig out his statement and bring it before the House of Commons. Let us hear from the Prime Minister before this debate is concluded.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

[*Translation*]

Mr. J.-A. Mongrain (Trois-Rivières): Mr. Speaker, I should like, for a few minutes, to make a contribution to this debate which has been going on for a few hours.

First, I feel the motion of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), is a good one because it enables us to discuss a problem which certainly concerns the government. I support it, I would even vote for it if only the seven following words were changed,

[Mr. MacEwan.]

and I quote the English version of the said motion:

[*English*]

That this house regrets that the government is not presenting—

I suggest that if those words were taken away and replaced with the following:

That this house invites the government to present programs to achieve a rate of economic growth which will reduce unemployment and also ensure that the economy will be able to absorb the large number of new entrants into the labour force this year—

I would go for that any time.

[*Translation*]

I know, Mr. Speaker, that this mania which consists in blaming the government for all the evils of mankind is part of the democratic game, but there are still some cases where it lessens the value of an otherwise constructive suggestion.

Mr. Speaker, I think that economic development concerns not only the federal government, but also every level of government. It is a field where those three levels of government should try to co-ordinate their efforts.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I would remind the minister and the house that such a movement has been started in my area, and I am glad to hear the minister say that our area, from Trois-Rivières on, suffered from regional disparities and needed the help of the governments. That is correct.

The mayors of the area I represent as well as those of some surrounding constituencies set up a regional organization a few months ago and developed a common program in order to help the provincial and federal governments fight unemployment and stimulate the economy. That organization, the conference of the mayors of the St. Maurice valley, includes some 85 mayors of the ridings of Trois-Rivières, Champlain, St. Maurice and of part of the riding of Berthier. Some even come from Joliette and from part of the riding of Richelieu, which was in the riding of Nicolet before the new redistribution.

These mayors met and set up a program to create first of all a regional economic development agency or board comprising of course full time experts and which would have sufficient credits to hire the necessary personnel to take efficient and constructive action.