

The Canadian Economy

800,000 unemployed who are sound and fit to work. They are getting rusty. If we put them to work, we could surely develop our country and produce more. Production would be related to the money guaranteed each Canadian. Whatever way we call it, it is social security for the various categories of Canadians.

Another member has spoken like that. The hon. member for Témiscamingue was rather hard on economists tonight. I hope it will give them food for thought. This is not done out of malice for them but to make them look squarely at problems. As for me, I would quote another economist. He opened his eyes and made a suggestion similar to that of the hon. member for Témiscamingue tonight. In fact, Mr. Theobald said the following:

He has again expressed his conviction that it is impossible to obtain full employment.

I share his view. I go on quoting him:

—However, he added, even if that objective were achieved, there would still be some workers who should be assured of an income. It would be those who are too old or too sick to get a job, whose responsibilities demand that they be spared the obligation of working, for instance, the woman who is alone and who has dependent children. Such would also be the case of students.

Some sneer when there is talk of paying students. That is comical! Yet, it has become necessary. He went on to say:

In order to make possible this guaranteed income . . . in order to establish an official policy to create job opportunities and guarantee an income to all those who are looking for work. He suggested that the initial level of the guaranteed income be set at \$1,000 for each adult and \$600 for each child.

About a guaranteed income for students, Mr. Theobald stated: "One must admit that it is just as fair to say of a student 'that he is working' as it is to say it of a worker in a factory. The time has come for us to accept the concept of a salary for the student, from age 14 perhaps, with proportionate increases as he gets older. Such a salary would be paid to any student attending a school or a university."

For our part, we advocate the payment of a salary to those who are 18 years of age. So, he goes further than we do.

Mr. Speaker, common sense incites us to reflect on this:

Automation requires that we change the fundamental notion according to which there cannot be any salary without some corresponding work.

In the old days, that was that. If you wanted a dollar, you had to go and earn it through your work. But in 1971, there is so much genius and intelligence around us, we have invented so many machines of all kinds that it is fascinating to watch them operate in our factories. And our unemployed must be satisfied with watching rolling mills shape steel into smooth sheets and powerful mechanical presses stamp parts through electronical systems, while in the old days, workers necessarily had to—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but his time has expired. He can carry on with his remarks only with the unanimous consent of the House.

Some hon. Members: No.

Some hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: There is no unanimous consent.

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

[English]

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, it had not been my intention to participate in this debate but I do so now for several reasons. First, I want to make it abundantly clear that as a member of the government and as Minister of Labour I share whatever responsibility the opposition is trying to place on the shoulders of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson). The Minister of Finance, I believe, has been subject to an awful lot of unnecessary and unwarranted abuse by members of the opposition in recent weeks.

Some hon. Members: Shame.

Mr. Mackasey: I welcome back the hon. member for Lethbridge (Mr. Gundlock). I have not seen him for about a year and a half. I suppose he has been quite ill.

The second reason I rise to take part in this debate is this: I think it is about time we put to rest the old chestnut which the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) was airing, namely, that the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) of this country, because he happened to be born to riches rather than to poverty, is insensitive to the burdens and difficulties encountered by working people. This is a very false rap to place on this man, because the whole history of the present Prime Minister, when he had the money and the resources to be independent, callous and insensitive to the needs of the people of this country was just the contrary.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (11:30 p.m.)

Mr. Mackasey: The present Prime Minister, in his youth, took the time, when the provincial police in the province of Quebec were no more than the private army of Mr. Duplessis, to march with workers who were on strike in that province. He provided, along with other civil libertarians, including Frank Scott, the type of legal advice that enabled the Witnesses of Jehovah in my province to take their court case to the Supreme Court of Canada and win it. That is hardly the action of a man who is insensitive, callous and unfeeling, as the opposition have tried to portray him to the Canadian people in recent weeks.

There is no use by going on at length because the real interest that the opposition has in the problem of unemployment is perhaps exemplified by the fact that there are less than six of them in the House at this time. Proportionately, they are least in attendance in this House. There are present three members of the Official Opposition. Where is the concern that they have for the poor unemployed people of this country? Why do they not demonstrate their concern by their participation in the debate tonight? Earlier in the debate the hon. member for Yukon (Mr. Nielsen) referred rather sarcastically to the fact that I was known as the man who cared about the man with the lunch pail. I have never been ashamed of caring for such men and I am not today. In the final analysis, the most precious ingredient this country has, its greatest resource, is not machinery, not government, but people.

No one in this House is pleased by the fact that we have an unemployment rate of 7.1 per cent today. No member of this side takes any satisfaction from such a high rate. To try and attribute such an attitude to the Prime Minister