

Expedition of Public Services

Canada and compare them with other countries, I think we have to appreciate that we have a historically unique situation.

In the first five years of the period about which the Economic Council advised us, the one million new jobs created in Canada equalled the new jobs created in seven European countries—Great Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium and a couple of others that I just do not recall at the moment. So there has been some progress down that road. Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to linger in making that kind of recital to the House but I do want to draw it to the attention of hon. members. We have in this country, as I see it, such a challenge that we could not rely on the normal fiscal and monetary measures that are employed in other countries. What does it really mean in Great Britain if they use anti-inflationary policies to control an inflationary period? There is no pressure upward on their labour force. Their unemployment does not mount as it does in Canada. What does it mean in France? It means the same thing.

What does it mean in Canada? It means that if we employed the standard techniques which have been developed since the great depression, the Keynesian techniques, and applied them here, confronted as we are with this pressure of entrants into the labour force unemployment will be bound to rise to perverse levels which none of us would want to tolerate. Therefore we have limitations in the use of the standard tools.

What has the government been doing to cope with this quite unique Canadian problem? I want to mention a few of the measures we have adopted. The DREE program is too well known for me to go into it here, but it is a determined effort to find new formulas, new approaches to bring economic expansion into the slow-growth regions where much unemployment exists. Some will say that it has not fully succeeded. Some will say it has not done much more than prevent a widening of the gap. But we all know, if we want to be honest with ourselves, that if we look at this problem internationally the wealthy nations are still pulling ahead of the undeveloped nations in spite of transfer payments, transfer programs and aid programs. We see that the more advantaged regions are still pulling ahead of the disadvantaged regions. We are launched on a very major program to redress some of the regional imbalances and I think there are some successes that ought to be acknowledged.

What else has the government done? There are the two experimental programs which have been launched to consider the human and the social side of unemployment in Canada. These are the Opportunities for Youth program and the Local Initiatives Program. They are innovative. What do they really mean in terms of this larger context? Surely they mean that if we cannot make use of the standard tools without incurring on the one hand undue unemployment and on the other hand excessive inflation, then we see we have in this unique period a unique system that will cope with only so much and in a sense we have to go out beyond that system with innovative programs.

With the two programs that have been successful, judging by the appeals coming to me as acting minister of manpower and immigration to the effect, "Please approve more of these projects," and the agonizing response I

[Mr. O'Connell.]

must make that the funds have now been allotted, our approach is to go to the people themselves and say, "Rather than delivering more programs from government, and we recognize their limitations, we will put resources in your hands." We say to the people, "Look at your communities. See how you can improve your communities and employ yourselves, or devise projects that will employ persons now unemployed." As all members of parliament know, we have found that the response has been overwhelming, that persons have displayed new energies. They have defined problems and opportunities in their communities. They have found work for people. This is the government that recognizing a unique employment problem took steps to put funds in the hands of local people who had initiative and were ready to go into action. Some of the results have been very dramatic not only in terms of community betterment but in terms of individual opportunities.

• (1620)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, we expect that in the private initiatives area and the municipal initiatives area the LIP program will provide temporary employment for 92,000 persons. The Opportunities for Youth program is again initiated for the summer and will find employment for 30,000 students. Additional summer programs in various areas, the militia for example, National Health and Welfare and travel and exchange programs will provide further opportunities. These are innovative approaches in the search for the just society. You may say that the phrase has been worn out, but the concept is there and the action is there. I have mentioned two or three instances of it.

There are some people working in Canada this winter who perhaps for a decade have not worked during the winter. People in isolated communities are working during the winter when previously the only persons to work would have been the postmaster and the grocery store proprietor. Those are the kinds of concern that this government has for unemployed persons, persons who find themselves seasonally disadvantaged. We are saying to these people, "We will reach across that gulf of injustice you have suffered over the years. We will put resources in your hands. We will trust you to generate projects to better your community." In that kind of partnership we will find employment and a new path toward the just society which is as alive in the concerns of this government as it has ever been.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. O'Connell: Mr. Speaker, there are in Canada people who are disadvantaged in another sense than seasonal. I have mentioned the special efforts made to cope with the seasonal problem of students, the one million or so who join the labour force every summer. There are special measures to deal with that seasonal problem and the seasonal problem which comes in the wintertime. But there are persons who are permanently disadvantaged, the native people, the poor, and there are new kinds of programs in existence and new programs to come which I hope will be available in this session.