

Unemployment

have some comments on that later. Obviously the social policy field is the clear loser.

Again we hear how devastating our budget was, how hard it was on the poor people. However, a professor from Ottawa's Carleton University says that this government's failure to count the effect of higher oil and gas prices on lower income groups through an energy tax credit, which had been the feature of the 1979 Conservative budget of John Crosbie, indicates the relative abandonment of social priorities.

The minister likes to say that by the time the next election rolls around the baby boom will be moving through and we will be very short of labour in the not too distant future. A few years ago that might have been the case, but recent studies suggest that that is really wishful thinking. For example, in *Executive* magazine of December, 1980, John Kettle wrote:

At the end of the 1980s, the labour force should still be growing at around 2 per cent a year, and this is most unlikely to precipitate a labour shortage.

I therefore say to the government that it is time they took a long, hard look at their programs and policies. They should zero in on the young people of Canada who are experiencing unemployment rates of 13, 14 and 15 per cent. In a country with a future like Canada, that is completely unacceptable. In fact, it is a national disgrace.

I hope the minister will zero in on this area and present some policies which will give the young people of Canada some long-term, meaningful employment, jobs and careers they can count on for years to come.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Cousineau (Gatineau): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration for the honour he is affording me, especially today, by inviting me to speak to this motion of the official opposition concerning employment in Canada. I did say "especially today" because an election is being held today in Quebec. I did my duty this morning and I take a few moments to invite and urge the people of Quebec, particularly in my federal riding of Gatineau, to exercise their right to vote so that tomorrow morning the electors will not look at themselves in the mirror while shaving and say: I should have gone out to vote. In my opinion, Mr. Speaker, the best way to safeguard the right to vote is to exercise it.

Mr. Speaker, a debate such as this one is indeed what we need, for it will enable us to set Canada's employment situation in its true and full perspective and to point out—and this will be the thrust of my speech—how and to what extent the federal government has contributed to create jobs throughout Canada. Of course, in a system of free economy such as ours where people choose to do what they want and where we experience difficulties which affect certain regions or certain industries, there is unemployment. But we should not forget that in spite of that our workers enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world. Unfortunately people do seem to forget that Canadians, be they in Quebec, Ontario or

Alberta, have one of the highest standards of living in the world. Should it be recalled as well that in our economic system the main responsibility for creating jobs rests with the private sector? The role of governments, including the federal government, is to help private industry and create a more favourable climate for growth and expansion through budgetary or other measures.

Mr. Speaker, hardly a few weeks ago the federal government selected five regions, including Tracy-Sorel and Sept-Îles, both in Quebec, where it launched a \$350 million assistance program to help regions and industries going through particularly hard times. Incidentally the federal government's job-creating role has undergone tremendous changes in recent years so that it could make a larger contribution in the creation of employment. Mr. Speaker, former manpower and immigration ministers used to hold responsibilities which were limited to placing and training workers.

During the seventies, the government launched various schemes, including the Local Initiative Program and the Opportunities for Youth Program, which once developed and improved became, for instance, the Canada Works Program, and now the community development projects which benefit Canadians by the thousands who are happy to be involved in useful projects hundreds of millions of dollars.

● (1640)

The integration of the Unemployment Insurance Commission into the Department of Employment and Immigration has favoured also a better co-ordination of the services to the benefit of the workers. Finally, we should not overlook that, at the same time, the federal government shares with the provinces the cost of workers' training to the tune of \$800 million. I would be remiss not to mention that in the areas of training and retraining as well as job creation, the department pays special attention to the particular needs of the young, the women, the Indians and the handicapped. But today, Mr. Speaker, I should like to deal with the Federal Government's employment programs, namely, the Community Development Projects, the Community Services Projects, the Local Economic Development Assistance (LEDA), the New Technology Employment Program, and finally, the Summer Youth Employment Program.

Under the community development program, government assistance is granted to all areas of the country, with special emphasis on areas of high unemployment. Last fall, for example, \$1,400,000 were committed to special projects in the Windsor area where many auto workers were laid off. Also, \$7 million were committed to programs set up by natives in various regions. This was in addition to the \$32.6 million provided through the local economy development assistance program and aimed at native communities across Canada. Also, Mr. Speaker, \$10 million were added to the worker training program budget for special native requirements.