

Economic Policy

Mr. McRae: It is clear that we cannot solve the problem of unemployment simply by pouring more money into the economy, lowering income taxes, and so on. I say this because the unemployment rate for males over 24 in Alberta is less than 3 per cent, adjusted, which is about as low as you can get. Compare that with those under 25 in Newfoundland—28 per cent. Therefore, as I say, we face a massive structural problem, the problem we must keep in mind if we are to solve some of the difficulties of the regions. I suggest that it may be necessary to institute some kinds of regional monetary policies if we are to solve some of these difficulties.

I was going to suggest many things we could do; unfortunately, time does not allow me to do so. I hope that we will not leave this debate with the idea in mind that we can take some simple steps to solve this problem, with the idea that we can do what we have traditionally done in the past. If we are to solve unemployment we shall need to look analytically at the problem both in a micro and a macro way. If we are to act positively, we shall need to understand also not only the large workings of our own economy, but the workings of the world economy. Only then will be able to act in a positive manner.

[Translation]

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity to make a few comments on the motion which I consider very timely in view of the current situation. Statistics Canada advised us of the situation which to my mind, and not only mine, is alarming if not catastrophic. The number of unemployed in greater Montreal is becoming alarming, as a newspaper reported yesterday.

This motion, which I find pertinent, gives us the opportunity of urging the government to take new initiatives. It also gives us a chance to find out what steps the government has already taken, though its efforts have clearly been inadequate for almost ten years. Not so long ago, I deplored the increase in unemployment which, in 1968, when the government came to power with its present Prime Minister, reached 168,000; we are approaching the million mark.

The former speaker said that was not necessarily a failure. I don't know what he considers a failure, and whether he feels that he can say unashamedly in the House that going from 168,000 to a million unemployed is not a failure. But I feel, Mr. Speaker, that it is a complete failure, and one that is costing a high price, and inflicting considerable hardship upon Canadians.

I should like to make a few remarks, Mr. Speaker. All the Quebecers who sit in this House know that the population has increased in the province of Quebec. Of course it is concerned about the future of Quebec, about the situation in Canada. And why, Mr. Speaker? Many reasons will be found to explain away our failures. But the fact remains that we have had and will have again discussion on unemployment. There will surely be many opportunities to discuss all the topics of concern to the Canadian people and especially those of Quebec.

I come from that province. I know what difficulties it has with regard to unemployment. There is considerable unem-

ployment elsewhere as well. People wonder why the situation is what it is in Quebec.

● (2040)

We wonder why Quebecers appear reluctant to trust the government and to have unlimited confidence in them at the present time. Once again, Mr. Speaker, we will find countless reasons for this but not the real ones. Some will even go as far as blaming the CBC for our economic failure. However I do not think that the CBC contributed to the unemployment situation in particular. But here again we will find scapegoats to justify the position of the present government.

Mr. Speaker, there are also unemployment problems in Quebec, and I could begin by depicting the situation in my riding where the unemployment level is close to 10 per cent. In other areas it is as high as 20 to 22 per cent. Recently I had the opportunity to visit the constituency of Témiscamingue which seems very concerned about the absence of policy in an area called northern Quebec which, as any other area in Quebec, deserves economic input which would enable the people there to enjoy a decent living.

Once again in my region we have learned through the local paper that a textile plant might close its doors, perhaps the last one in my riding. It did employ 700 family heads a few years ago. There are about 125 left now. A year ago the owners of that plant saw fit to sell it to a good Quebecer—from Joliette to boot—who spent not only his energy but his capital as well in the operation of that plant. Our local paper reports today that this plant is likely to close in the near future because the government did not take in time the necessary action in the textile sector. So chances are another hundred family heads will be laid off in a few days and I think that kind of situation is spreading out through the province.

Mr. Speaker, government members will tell me that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Chrétien) has taken a rather drastic decision lately by bringing back the 1975 quotas on imports.

And to think, Mr. Speaker, that for ten years, so important an industry for Canada, and particularly for Quebec, considering the large number of workers in that sector, has been allowed to deteriorate.

I received this afternoon a press release to the effect that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce had the firm intention of reviewing the import levels in the footwear industry. Eventually, we will get a report, in a few months probably, telling us that the import levels interferes with the Canadian industry. That is what we will probably be told in a month. For the last five or six years, the opposition has been calling for drastic and equitable measures on behalf of the Canadian industry. At the same time, government members will also claim that the Department of Regional Economic Expansion has injected fantastic amounts of money to create new jobs.

As I said before, the serious mistake made by this government was to neglect this Canadian industry which deserved, I think, the protection of this government in the interests of the