

Job Creation

Because of high interest rates woodworkers right across the country are unemployed. In my own riding of Nanaimo-Alberni there is a town which has 6,000 woodworkers with 1,500 of them now unemployed. The town itself is hurting, the businessmen are losing money and home owners are losing their houses because of this government's high interest rate policy.

A young fellow from Nova Scotia who came with the CLC to meet with us made representations to our caucus this morning. He put a human face to this picture of high interest rates and unemployment. His story could be applied to all kinds of woodworkers across this nation. There are some 11,300 unemployed in British Columbia. Some 47 per cent of the B.C. plywood industry is inactive because of the slowdown in home construction. About 85 per cent of the plywood manufactured in this nation goes to the construction of Canadian homes. We have unemployed plywood workers and at the same time we have people looking for homes and apartments who cannot afford them and we have many families losing their homes. Bob from Nova Scotia, who has five children, has to pay 60 per cent of his income toward his mortgage because of the 22 per cent interest rate. He represents 14,000 home owners in Atlantic Canada, 30 per cent to 40 per cent of whom are facing mortgage renewals in the next three months with interest rates fluctuating.

We in the NDP have some suggestions for this government. We have been hearing for years and years from the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Gray) about an industrial strategy. We want to know why we cannot employ more people in Atlantic Canada in the shipbuilding industry and establish a merchant marine. We have too many people in Atlantic Canada trying to make a living with a limited resource. The fishing industry just cannot support the number of people who are presently trying to make a living from fisheries. These people have no other employment opportunities. We want to know why this government does not move toward an industrial strategy which would enable the manufacture of more goods in Canada. We want to know why we in the maritimes cannot have our own shipbuilding industry.

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Through Bill C-48 we are not going to produce the jobs and equipment necessary for offshore and northern development of oil and gas. We should be doing this and we should be insisting that the spin-off jobs go to Atlantic Canada, central and western Canada to produce income and a strong social fabric so that families can afford to purchase homes and feed their children as well as give them access to community facilities, thus encouraging families to remain together.

There is a dilemma facing families in Canada in that both parents have to work and often their children are placed in inadequate day care facilities. In some of the worst cases, families of the unemployed have to split up to enable the wife and children to apply for welfare because they can get more from welfare than if they were living together as a family. I have had that very example in Ottawa from the CLC.

When we talk about caring, we talk about caring for people in this country. This government has made many objections to our accusations that it is not a caring government. Our party is not the one who is sending this message to the government. It is our constituents who are sending it through us.

It is time that the government woke up to the real facts of life in this great nation which could be greater without a Liberal government.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Herb Gray (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, today's motion claims that this government has rejected its commitments to stimulate long-term job creation through a comprehensive approach to economic policy planning. I believe that the facts are precisely the opposite to what these hon. members from the New Democratic Party would have this House and the Canadian public believe.

In the Speech from the Throne delivered on April 14, 1980, the government set out in clear and definite terms the nature of our industrial policy commitment. It said that the government would "promote a national development policy that would provide jobs, stimulate growth, build on regional strength and increase Canadian ownership and control of the economy".

With the budget last week, the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) published a paper entitled, "Economic Development for the 1980s" which brings together in a single document the policies and priorities of the Government of Canada for national economic development. The opposition members would have the public believe that what this document says about the role of the federal government in economic development falls short of the commitment which we have made in industrial policy. I think they are very wrong in this idea. I believe the principles and priorities set out in that document reflect a consistent adherence to the commitments on industrial and economic development policy which the government made at the beginning of its mandate and which have since guided its extensive work on industrial development policy.

The role we have set for the national government in facilitating economic growth and industrial renewal is a vigorous one. The government is and will remain an active player in the industrial development of this country.

The government believes that in the future, as in the past, private sector responses to market signals must map the essential direction of economic growth where markets function effectively.

Nevertheless, there is, in our view, a continuing need for government action to support private entrepreneurial activity, to promote the maximum competitive industrial performance and bring about a fair sharing of the benefits of growth in every region of Canada.

As the economic development document states:

The Government of Canada must assume a leadership role in the field of economic development. Harnessing the resources of the economy is a national enterprise which includes but extends beyond the interests of particular regions