

Employment

In the last number of years, as women entered the labour force, they went primarily into the service sectors where the economy had expanded to allow that kind of entry into the work force, but that tertiary sector of the economy is now saturated and women who will be entering the labour force will not have that opportunity. The question is whether they will be trained for other jobs. Will they have the opportunity to train for jobs which have normally been classified as "men's jobs"? We see very little of this at the present time. Yes, there are a few programs the government has undertaken, and I am glad to see that, but they are minimal compared with the number of retraining and job-creation projects needed to accommodate the great number of women who will be entering the labour force throughout the 1980s. They will be needed to retrain those women who are in secretarial and clerical positions but who will not be able to remain in those positions as they become more and more automated. The government should be making tremendous efforts to enrol these people in new job-creation projects or retraining projects.

I urge the government to realize there is still a much bigger challenge facing it. There is a much bigger problem awaiting us as we go through the 1980s as far as women in the work force are concerned. I plead with the minister that he do far more now to prepare for that eventuality than the government is doing at the present time.

Mr. Jim Manly (Cowichan-Malahat-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to speak about what is really the number one political issue in Canada today. In the last few weeks I have talked to people in my constituency and in the area, and time and again I have been told this is the issue they see as being crucial. The leader of my party, the hon. member for Oshawa (Mr. Broadbent), has just finished completing a tour of a number of centres across Canada. On that tour he highlighted this and pointed to the fact that our party will be working to make this the number one political issue in Canada. I am pleased to see that the party to my right has also begun to see the light.

For anyone who has listened to what New Democrats have been saying over the past few months—indeed, the past few years—the current crisis should not be any surprise because time and again we have warned the government and the Canadian people that our present policies have been leading to disaster.

Unemployment is a basic and number one issue for two main reasons. First, there is the personal dimension of suffering by those who are directly involved. Second, we must recognize the drain unemployment imposes on local, regional and national economies.

If I could talk for just a moment about the personal dimension, when we recognize that every day—from last August right through to today and, according to government predictions, right on to at least March—3,000 more people are thrown into the ranks of the unemployed, we need to realize the difficulty each one of those 3,000 people faces in trying to keep afloat in the flood of inflation with only unemployment insurance or welfare to help them. We need to recognize the

feeling parents have as they see lost opportunities for their children and forgo the things they simply cannot afford but a few weeks ago would have considered absolutely essential. We need to look at the big question mark which hangs over the heads of middle-aged and older employees who have been terminated from jobs to which there seems to be no call-back, and they wonder where they can go to get any kind of job again. These are people who all their lives have been productive employees and contributors to our society, and they are now being tossed to one side.

When we talk to these people, we often find that somehow the callous attitude of society which often blames the victim has got through to them so that they have a personal sense of failure. We need to convey very clearly to them and to all Canadians that it is not the victims of unemployment who are at fault but rather this government that has refused to take any action because that does not fit in with its narrow priorities.

Second, we need to recognize that when some one million Canadians are listed as officially unemployed and another 648,000 are rather euphemistically called "discouraged workers", making a total of 1,635,000 people who are out of work, that is not simply a number of small personal tragedies but has become a national disaster. "Discouraged workers" is the phrase Statistics Canada uses for those people who are no longer actively seeking employment because they have given up looking because they realize there are simply no jobs to be had.

When we consider the money paid out in unemployment insurance and in welfare, when we consider the loss of tax revenue and the loss of production of goods and services and when we look at the depressing effect on business, we have to say that unemployment is not just a series of personal tragedies but, in fact, a national disaster. At the very time when small businesses face killing high interest rates, they are also hit with reduced demand because people who do not have money coming in as wages do not have money to spend in stores and restaurants.

It might seem I am merely restating the obvious, but unfortunately the government cannot, or will not, see the obvious. Some of the Liberal backbenchers almost got the message during this past winter break when they returned to their constituencies and began to understand some of the ramifications of the budget policies of this government, but then they came back to Ottawa and got another message. It was a very simple message.

Mr. Blaikie: "Do as you are told."

Mr. Manly: "Get in line." I noticed last week at the time of the vote they were all in line. They were all present and accounted for. It seems that all the members on the opposite side share the vision of the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen). Instead of seeing the obvious, they share a vision that denies the everyday reality of 1,600,000 Canadians.