

Anti-Inflation Policies

not just numbers, people who are out of work, out of hope, and who are running out of patience.

When the Prime Minister is told that more than one half million Canadians are out of work, he has the curious view that it is an adequate answer to say there were more out of work sometime in the past. Mr. Speaker, this is certainly the first time in our history that a Government of Canada has deliberately tried to create unemployment, and that sets this government apart from any government in the past. But what the Prime Minister does not seem to care about is that many of the people who are out of work today are the same people who were out of work in the days past of which he spoke, and in some of the areas of chronic unemployment they are the sons and the daughters of people whose unemployment a decade ago the Prime Minister is so prone to refer to today. The Prime Minister and his ministers should stop these debating tricks, and recognize that these are human lives they are dealing with and which, in some cases, their policies are deliberately destroying.

The government offers a ritual defence of its policy of deliberately creating unemployment. It suggests that it is necessary to fight inflation and that we must choose between inflation and unemployment. That is a false choice. It is an old trick, to reduce every problem to two contradictory extremes. The suggestion that we can fight inflation only by creating unemployment is a deliberate attempt to mislead and to polarize Canadians.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: The alternatives, in fact, are not as singular or as stark as the Prime Minister and his colleagues suggest. Their argument, that we cannot fight unemployment and inflation together, directly contradicts the views expressed by the Chairman of the Prices and Incomes Commission as well as the view of many other economists. By posing these false and stark alternatives, the government not only perpetuates unemployment but it impedes the discussion or development of alternative means to fight inflation, which would not lay so heavy and so unjust a burden on the weak, the poor and the unemployed.

I would remind the House that the policy of the government not only deliberately creates unemployment, but that the government is also deliberately encouraging the view among the well-to-do in Canada that

unemployment does not really matter; that it is a necessary evil and that, in the words of the Prime Minister, it is a regrettable side effect; that the government in fact is pursuing a bold initiative in which someone has to suffer and it might as well be the poor. It is important to remember that this policy, this willingness to relegate the unemployed to the status of "a regrettable side effect," is all being done in the name of a just society. It is not a just society at all. Instead, these things are calculated to create a society that is as cynical, selfish and as callous as the government itself.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: I would not often make this kind of judgment in a debate, but, Sir, this is an immoral policy. The government has no moral right to throw half a million Canadians out of work and to suggest to the comfortable majority who have jobs that this kind of callousness is somehow acceptable. The basic premise of the government's policy is that the weak should suffer so that the strong can prosper. That is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. That is uncivilized.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Stanfield: If we do nothing else in this debate we must force the government to see unemployment in its proper context in this country, not as a cruel weapon in a hesitant campaign to achieve other goals but as a cause of human misery and regional depression, and possibly as a source of serious social disorder.

A figure of more than half a million unemployed is bad enough as it stands, but the crisis of unemployment extends well beyond the people it affects directly. It creates fear among hundreds of thousands of other Canadians who are not certain that their jobs will continue, who fear that they will be the next victims of the government's determination to put more slack into the economy. This policy affects families, Mr. Speaker, and the planning of all those Canadians, whether they are out of work already or whether they fear they will be put out of work soon, and that means hundreds of thousands more Canadians. Probably millions of Canadians are made more insecure and miserable by the fact that unemployment is high, and that the Government of Canada, their government, has stated—and it is hard to believe, Sir—that it is prepared to push the unemployment figure higher.