

Supply

the federal government for all their problems. For example la Société d'amiante du Québec which is now owned by the Quebec government is neither a private company nor is it run by the federal government. Is it in good shape? Not at all.

This asbestos plant which was bought by the Quebec government has temporarily ceased its operations because of a glut on the market, of stocks piling up and because this material is hard to sell on world markets. However, it is a government-owned company. In Port-Cartier, SIDBEC which is 51 per cent owned by the Quebec government has difficulties finding markets for its products. Yet the federal government has nothing to do with it. The Quebec government in good faith took over a company called Tricofil, which folded up due to the lack of demand. It is a matter of competition. It is a different problem. The fact that a company is owned by the government does not make it necessarily more profitable nor does it open up new markets. The only factor involved is the cost-output ratio in a world situation which should normally be positive. These are significant factors to consider for an understanding of this phenomenon.

Training young people is another factor, as I explained again last week, and the various governments have an obligation to see that training programs are implemented to enable the young people to be really employed, because at the present time, in spite of a 9 per cent unemployment rate in Canada, we are importing labour from abroad. Why? Because we do not have enough skilled workers here. Why? Because, to a large extent, our provincial training programs are not adapted to the labour market. However, it is somewhat ironic that we do have such high unemployment in Canada and that this government has to import labour. Those elements have to be considered within the whole problem. Sure enough, everyone, and we in particular, is suffering from high interest rates. I think that no one would deliberately want to maintain those rates. But ask the experts; there are many differences as to how to set interest rates and at what levels.

Just look at what happened in England or in France, in spite of a so-called socialist government. Unemployment is rising. The value of the French franc has considerably decreased on the exchange market. Of course, if we consider the Canadian problem as such, there seems to be no way out, which is bad enough, but if we compare it with other countries, we see that this problem is less serious and that we have many more alternatives than other countries. And this is the important point. On the other hand, if the government did not do anything, the opposition parties and the people would be justified in demanding programs and more specific job creation programs.

However, we have programs under way and for observers of the political and economic situation, Canada offers very concrete projects that will be implemented shortly, as the opposition is well aware. The opposition is constantly whining. It is as if a surgeon, after making his diagnosis, started to cry over his patient's illness instead of gripping his scalpel firmly to operate. After convalescing, the patient will thank him for

having had the courage to do so. In fact, it takes a lot of courage for this government to implement the measures that we have taken, but we know very well that the health of our country depends on it and that a few months or a few years from now, the people will be very glad that the government showed courage when required. On the other side, they cry over the present sad state of affairs. On this side, we have made a diagnosis and we are trying to find a way of making our country feel better. So, Mr. Speaker, I shall simply conclude by saying that as a parliamentary secretary and a citizen of this country, I share the concern of the opposition parties regarding the economic problems, but we have short-term and long-term measures that will be much more beneficial than all their whining, and I am convinced that we shall continue to build this country in spite of our differences.

• (1630)

[English]

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James): Mr. Speaker, I must say I am glad the motion before us today deals with the question of the economy. It says quite categorically that this House condemns the government for its economic policies. Clearly, if there is any time when a government should be condemned for its economic policies, now is the time.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Keeper: Why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? Well, as everyone knows, today the unemployment statistics were issued by Statistics Canada, and for the first time, certainly that I can remember, when we look at the real unemployment statistics which include those people who are discouraged and no longer seeking employment, we now have 1,913,000 unemployed in Canada, almost two million people, and if there is any justification for condemning the government's economic policies, that is it.

In addition, if we look at the unemployment statistics on a regional basis, the unadjusted unemployment rate in every province of Canada has gone up. It is not only the unadjusted rates which have gone up. The province of Newfoundland is one exception in which the seasonally adjusted statistics for unemployment fell by some five tenths of 1 per cent. However, we find that the seasonally adjusted rate still remains at a high of 14.2 per cent in all other regions, from Prince Edward Island to British Columbia. The seasonally adjusted rate of unemployment in this country has gone up. If we look at unemployment by age groups, for example, we find the unadjusted rates for those between the ages of 15 and 24 have gone up, reaching a high today of 18.4 per cent. For those over the age of 25, the unadjusted unemployment rate has gone up to 8 per cent.

If we break down the population in the country on the basis of sex, even these statistics demonstrate that all unemployment rates are going up. For example, with regard to unadjusted unemployment rates for men, the rates have risen from 10 per