

Supply

For similar reasons, a particle board mill in Haileybury has cut back its staff by 25 workers from normal operating levels. The furniture manufacturers that are its major customers are in trouble. No one is buying new furniture these days, so they do not need much particle board. Unless the situation improves quickly, this mill may have to face the prospect of laying off more workers or introducing a reduced work week.

A diamond drilling outfit in Kirkland Lake has laid off 50 workers, more than half its work force. Even though this company operates throughout the country, there is just not enough exploration work to go around because of a lack of incentives, skyrocketing interest rates and shaky investor confidence in the economy. These are not isolated cases; I could stand here and cite examples all day long.

The saddest thing about the situation is that there is tremendous potential for development in Timiskaming if the economy were in a healthy condition. There is potential for the development of a commercial fishing industry and expanded transportation facilities in the Moosonee area.

There is potential for development of private tree nurseries in the Cochrane and Matheson areas, and manufacturing related to the resource base in Kirkland Lake, and a grain elevator and food processing facility in the Englehart, Earlton, and New Liskeard area. There is potential for the development of the tourism industry in Cobalt, Temagami and Martin River areas. There is potential for development of a wood product manufacturing facility in the Field and Verner area.

The future of these potential developments, however, is now even more in doubt with the demise of the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. As pointed out in the Senate Committee on National Finance report on Government policy and regional development, there is no longer a Government Department that is solely responsible for the promotion of economic development in the least developed areas of the country. In northern Ontario, this is of great concern to us, but it is hard even to think about future development when times are as bad as they are today. Instead of developing our potential, we are forced to watch our existing industries and businesses suffer from the effects of our depressed economy. The unemployment figures in many communities in Timiskaming, as they have elsewhere in Canada, have almost doubled in the past year. Positive steps must be taken now to turn the economy around and get our people working again. Steps must be taken to encourage job-creating investment, to create a positive and open investment climate. Confidence in the economy of this country must be restored to create long-term employment opportunities. We need a comprehensive economic recovery plan now. We have seen little in the way of positive action on the unemployment problem from the Liberal Government.

● (1730)

The only thing this Government seems to come up with is a program that will allow a small portion of workers whose UIC claims have been exhausted to requalify for benefits. The news that 60,000 temporary jobs will be created does little to ease

the worries of the 1.4 million Canadians who are out of work. This stop-gap make-work program is not the cure for the ills of unemployment that plague our country. It is like giving a band-aid to a man who has just cut off his arm. We must look beyond the statistics. These are not just numbers we are talking about; these are human beings, these are people with families and responsibilities and dreams. We cannot turn a cold shoulder to more than one million unemployed Canadians.

Canadians want to work. They want and need the security of a steady job. There are people out there who are on the point of giving up hope. They are desperate and they are losing confidence in themselves and in this country. Even those who are lucky enough to have a job are worried stiff. They wonder if they will be next to join the unemployment line. And it is not only individuals who are affected but entire communities as well. Every time there is another lay-off or shutdown or closure, the shock waves are felt throughout the community.

Small businesses that depended on that payroll are affected, and so are their employees and so are their families. In a small single-industry community, the news of a lay-off hits like a blow to the solar plexus. The quality of life in these communities is bound to suffer as a result of the social problems often associated with long-term unemployment. The social fabric of these communities can be destroyed.

We in northern Ontario are particularly worried about the plight of our young people. For many years our young people have been forced to move to cities in southern Ontario or western Canada to find employment. We have struggled to bring in the developments that would provide employment for them in the north. But now we are fighting against impossible odds. Unemployment amongst our young people is a major problem from coast to coast in this country. Young Canadians now in school are worried whether they will have a job when they graduate. Will they have a career and a secure future? Our young people have goals and ambitions. Will their dreams be shattered? Something must be done to give them the opportunity of having a bright and secure future.

The people of Timiskaming and Canada are a proud and hardworking people. They want to work and they want real jobs. They are tired of empty rhetoric and window dressing make-work programs. They want to see some solid action being taken to create long-term employment in this country. They are frustrated by the lack of opportunities. They are tired of inaction. They are depressed and concerned about their future and the future of their children. This Government has a moral responsibility to act immediately to provide a long-term solution to the unemployment problems that are bringing this country to its knees.

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): First of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. MacDougall) on his maiden speech. I would like to welcome him to the House of Commons, not only because of the speech he has just given, a task with which he has acquitted himself well, but because he is a native Cape Bretoner. Although we are not of the same