

The Canadian Economy

for the past 10 years in this country. In what kind of rubbish does the Minister of Finance indulge?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: What kind of nonsense does a man complacently place before us which makes the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) grin all evening as he listened to this nonsense? What kind of rubbish is that? Even in the present year, that is a nonsensical, misleading, distorting statement.

Even though there were approximately 200,000 more jobs, the increase in the labour force in this one year was 238,000. Already it fell short by a very substantial proportion to find jobs for the increase in one year, let alone the increase in the labour force over time. He has repeated the same complacent rubbish, as every minister has done. The minister said that we have had an unprecedented increase in the participation rate. Sure, there has been some increase, but let me quote some figures to show what the unprecedented increase has been in the last quarter. I have the figure. I will start with 1967 so I will not have to spend too much time.

In 1967, the participation rate in July was 55.7; August, 55.8; September, 55.5. In 1968, the participation rate for July was 55.5; August, 55.5; September, 55.7. In 1969, the rate in July was 55.6; August, 55.5; September, 55.4. For 1970, the participation rate for July was 55.9; August, 55.6; September, 55.7. For this year, 1971, the participation rate for July was 56; August, 55.8; September, 56. If there was any difference, it was one small part of a small one per cent. The minister tries to seek consolation in that fact as an explanation for the increase in unemployment. How gullible does he think even his own members are?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Lewis: How puerile and gullible does he think the people of Canada are about such nonsense?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

• (9:00 p.m.)

Mr. Lewis: Let the government have the decency and the humility to accept the fact that its policies up to now have been wrong and that the unemployment figures are the result of those policies. The Canadian people would appreciate such honesty and frankness. This dishonesty, this distortion is shameful not only for the government but for Parliament where it is pronounced.

Mr. Hogarth: Give the other side of the picture.

Mr. Lewis: I wish, Mr. Speaker, you would tell the spirit-ed gentleman to keep quiet. The program will, I hope with all my heart, do some good. But it is too late. Throughout his submission the minister said the provinces would be consulted as soon as possible. I say to the government, to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) that in a federal country such as ours these consultations ought to take place before a minister announces a program, so that the provinces and the municipalities, through the provinces, might have something to say about the priorities and might know what the government intended to propose.

One does not have to be an economist to know that three-quarters of what the minister proposed will take time to come into effect. You cannot make \$113 million available to housing and expect that the jobs will be open in December, January or February. They will not. The Minister of State for Urban Affairs (Mr. Andras) has money already available, money which has not yet been picked up. It probably amounts to a great deal more than \$113 million. If he has used it all up, he should have been after the government a great deal earlier than now. It takes time for people to invest in housing. It takes time for additional money to become effective.

The whole proposition advanced by the minister amounts, in major part, to a winter works program. I have no objection to that. It is the government which objected to it. Everything is a kind of tokenism. Look at the breakdown of the \$113 million for housing and other works. In his statement the minister talked, and the press gallery no doubt noted it, about sewage treatment, roads—

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): That is what we call public works.

Mr. Lewis: But in the accompanying document the minister said \$4 million will be spent on sewage treatment projects. Mr. Speaker, I should like to know how many sewage treatment plants you can build across Canada for \$4 million.

Then, again, we are told that \$1.7 million is to be set aside for land assembly. How much land assembly can you carry out in the major communities of Canada for \$1.7 million? I point these things out because I am anxious that the people of Canada should know that the statements made by the minister have to be read with great care.

I want to say a word about the training program. The sum of \$15 million is to be available to expand the present training program. But for what jobs? Is this program to provide additional training both under the present scheme and on the job merely a way of reducing the size of the unemployment rolls, or is it a serious undertaking? What jobs are there for the trained people to take? I notice in the accompanying document that since 1966-1967, when the government's training program was set up, 1,134,485 Canadians have been upgraded and trained under this plan. This is very good, Mr. Speaker. I ask Your Honour to stop and think what this means. It means that approximately one-eighth of our labour force has been through this training scheme.

Mr. Speaker, we must have in this country the most upgraded and trained corps of unemployed in the western world. What are we training these people for? Where are the jobs? What will the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) do with them? What will the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Lang) do with them? I am the last to decry the fact that some young people will now receive training and be upgraded. It is necessary to do it. But I say to these people, "Do not be misled." When they have finished their training and upgrading process they stand a chance of being in the same unhappy position as others who have received training and been upgraded—the chance they will leave college and walk the streets. That is what a good many have had