

Employment Programs

honest, has just said that all those who sit on this side used to sit on his side. I have never sat on that side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. I shall point out to the hon. member for Trois-Rivières that there is no foundation to his question of privilege and that the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe has the floor.

Mr. Ricard: What is the situation in the province of Quebec, Mr. Speaker? In October 1970, there were 159,000 unemployed. This is a record which does not cheer me up. In Quebec, 8.8 per cent of the working population is unemployed.

It is the responsibility of the members of the opposition to call the attention of the government members to their responsibilities and to make sure that they assume them.

By looking at their previous speeches, it is clear that they are responsible for providing employment to those who want to work, but however 159,000 people are unemployed in the province of Quebec.

What is still worse, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the forecast for the winter months is even darker. It is estimated, in some quarters, that there will be from 750,000 to 800,000 unemployed in Canada. Are we justified in protesting loudly and asking the ministers and the hon. members opposite to do something to alleviate unemployment, this cancer of our society.

● (8:50 p.m.)

It is also disturbing to realize that unemployment periods last longer. In October 1970, 74,000 people had been unemployed for a period of four to six months. This represents 18 per cent of the unemployed, in that category. For the corresponding period last year, there were 42,000, or only 13 per cent of the unemployed.

As to those who have been unemployed more than six months, there were 72,000 in October, that is 17 per cent of the unemployed, while in October 1969, 46,000 were in that category, that is 15 per cent, and fiery speeches, appeasement speeches from the other side of this House will not succeed in disproving those facts based on D.B.S. figures.

In the building sector, 34,000 jobs were lost in October 1970; among the bush workers, there are 10,000 fewer jobs than last September.

And who is responsible for that situation? It will be recalled that in order to fight inflation, this government found that solution, namely create unemployment and thus fight inflation at the expense of workers, farmers and low income groups. That is an inhuman way, I repeat it, following my leader who said so on several occasions in this House, and the government has no reason to be pleased. Instead of coming up with an expansion policy, the government has found nothing better than to implement restrictive measures in order to create unemployment.

Mr. Speaker, I would be angry with myself if I did not take advantage of the few minutes I still have to once

[Mr. Mongrain.]

more point out the situation prevailing in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, perhaps for the twentieth time, I will say that 20 per cent of the labour force is unemployed in the Saint-Hyacinthe area. What are the reasons for such unemployment? I shall mention the closing of some plants a reduction of personnel on account of foreign competition and the adverse effect of the refusal of the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) to recognize as a designated zone the Saint-Hyacinthe area, though all the required criteria for designation apply to it. The city council, the common front of Saint-Hyacinthe and I myself made representations to the minister, but we all met with a refusal.

A while ago I said that some plants had closed down in the Saint-Hyacinthe area. According to a study made last summer by the Richelieu-Yamaska Social Development Council, from 1964 to March 1970, we lost ten industries that were providing work to at least 494 employees.

In the field of shoe manufacturing, we have also lost at least one industry that employed several hundred workers. According to this study, we have lost the share that the Saint-Hyacinthe region had a right to expect, had it been fairly treated by the federal government.

I would like to quote a few excerpts from this study in order to put on record what our people think of the refusal by this government to make the Saint-Hyacinthe region a designated area. After considering the reasons why the federal government disregarded the Saint-Hyacinthe-Drummondville region for the development of an international airport, the report states, and I quote:

The federal government, for technical as well as economical reasons, did not comply with a request submitted by the province of Quebec on behalf of the Yamaska region.

We venture to think that no political consideration intervened in the rejection of the Saint-Hyacinthe region as the airport site and as a designated area.

And further, we can read:

In support of this hope, let us mention that the "Snow Jet" plant, which would have created 700 immediate jobs, chose to locate in Drummondville, not in Saint-Hyacinthe, for the only reason that the economic advantages were better there.

This is, in my opinion, and in the opinion of my people, an injustice to our region. I would again draw the attention of hon. members and, in particular, of the powers responsible, one of which is the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion, to this fact, so that this injustice can be corrected as soon as possible.

It has often been repeated today that the hon. Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) had announced a series of measures which had already been put into effect to remedy this situation. It must be recognized that if these measures were actually taken, then they were inadequate, since the unemployment rate only keep rising month after month. It is the responsibility of those who sit on treasury benches to see that this situation, which is degrading for the workers, is eliminated as soon as possible.