

Employment

Mr. Crombie: Madam Speaker, like most Members of Parliament who go back to their constituencies from time to time, or travel across the country attending public meetings, or are involved in task forces or other things, I have been struck by what people have had to say about the economy, what is happening to their part of the country, indeed even their neighbourhood. Most people know what is happening best by what happens to them directly. Most people can speak to Members of Parliament with a clear understanding of what it is that is bothering them. If I can use an old-fashioned phrase, they know what they know.

People know that our problems are not unique. They do not spend all of the time talking about how bad the government is; they have a broader perspective of what is happening in the world than official spokesmen give them credit for. People know that throughout the world, particularly the industrialized western world, we are going through a time of incredible fundamental change. People are aware that the economic difficulties are worldwide; they know those difficulties are related somehow to new energy prices. People are aware that these difficulties are related to technological change which will significantly change the workplace over the next generation.

People know that others are suffering from unemployment. They know that others are suffering from a loss of productivity. People know that in other parts of the world there has been a head-on crash between economic realities and social expectations. They know that most countries in the world are trying to come up with solutions, are trying experiments to deal with what they know to be a worldwide problem. People are aware that if the wood-producing industry in Canada is in grave difficulty, it is also experiencing difficulty in Japan. They know that West Germany is experimenting with early retirement at the age of 45, that there are experiments in France with massive public sector employment opportunities. They know that the United States is experimenting with so-called supply side economics or Reaganomics. People know that throughout the world there is a tremendous number of experiments and attempts to cope with what is considered to be a world problem.

People also know when they look at the record of this country's ability to deal with that worldwide problem that that record is awful. They get their information from television, radio, newspapers and from talking to one another. People know that although there is a worldwide problem and the forces that beset us are also outside the borders of this country, they know in their hearts that this country is not doing the job. Even if people do not know the figures, they know that Canada has slipped further and further behind in its world standing.

For instance, in 1968 this country's standard of living was the third highest in the world. It was second to Sweden and the United States. In 1980, Canada was no longer in third place but had dropped to thirteenth. Canada is now behind Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, Luxembourg, Belgium, The Netherlands and Finland—I could go on and on. But people know that Canada's standard of living has dropped and that our world standing is that of thirteenth place.

People know that our industrial productivity is second worst in the whole industrialized world. Between 1977 and 1980, Mr. Speaker, our productivity rose by only 2.3 per cent. The countries of Italy, Sweden, France, Germany and the United Kingdom were far ahead of us in industrial productivity. They also know that the reason for the loss of industrial productivity is because the government opposite, for well over a decade, has refused to do anything of any practical value to have a long-term effect in the field of research and development.

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They also know this country has a cost of borrowing higher than any other industrialized country. We are now in the neighbourhood of an 18 per cent prime. Germany is at 15.4, France is 14 and the United Kingdom is at 15. They know this country's record on the cost of borrowing for the things they need is the worst in the industrialized world. They know—and this is a most telling statistic—that in terms of economic growth and performance we are now the twenty-first out of 24 nations in the industrialized western world.

They do not carry those figures around in their heads, Mr. Speaker, but they know that our attempt to cope with the worldwide problem has been an utter failure. That is why the motion before you is one which says that it is not merely job opportunities that is the problem; it is the government's deliberate policy which has created the difficulty for which we now have rising unemployment, the worst since the depression of the 1930s. They also know that that deliberate and fundamental policy of the government is one that says that in order to fight inflation interest rates have to go up, and therefore unemployment must be created.

Unemployment in this country, Mr. Speaker, is not a hapstance; it is not something which happened on the way to doing something else. The incredibly high levels of unemployment in Canada are a consequence of the deliberate policy of the government. That they know. If they required any further understanding of that, it was clear to them when they read the budget and it was brought home to them that, as we looked and peeled away at it, it was animated by the same philosophy which said the only way this government can deal with the future of this country, as they see it, is to create more unemployment. That is how simply they understand it, and that of course is the simple truth.

Now, Mr. Speaker, people I have talked to, not only in Toronto but in other parts of the country, are not looking around for easy or slick solutions. They know we have to protect the dollar. They know that if it goes down to the seventies it will create further inflation and therefore further unemployment. They worry about the dollar. They do not want it to go down because they know its bad effects in practical terms. What they are opposed to is the way in which the government has proceeded to deal with inflation, because they are unwilling to accept that the price of the government's policy should be a continuation of deliberately increasing unemployment in Canada.