

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

The unemployment statistics released today are staggering: 11.2 per cent, the highest rate since this government took office in November 1984. There are 1,536,000 officially unemployed with hundreds of thousands more who have given up hope and given up looking for a job. Seven provinces now have double digit rates of unemployment.

This government must take responsibility for the devastating situation we are in today. When will the minister finally admit on behalf of his government that the government does not have the slightest idea how to put Canadians back to work? When will he finally admit that the unemployment rate is a direct result of the policies of his government?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year members opposite were calling for lower interest rates. They were calling for a lower dollar. They were calling for a 5 per cent down payment for mortgages. Two weeks ago they called for more section 26 training in Canada.

Today we have a lower dollar, lower interest rates and \$150 million more for training and work sharing, but we still have problems and we acknowledge that.

What is important is for the hon. member to pay attention to the real facts that happened this month.

Mr. Nunziata: People have lost hope.

Mr. Valcourt: The member says: "People have lost hope". How does he explain that over 50,000 people returned to the labour force this month? That is an encouraging and positive sign for our economy.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, there are faces behind the massive numbers of unemployed in Canada. The hardest hit are women and youth.

The unemployment rate among women rose to 10.3 per cent; 20,000 women lost their jobs last month. Youth

Oral Questions

unemployment is at 17.8 per cent. There are 114,000 fewer young people employed this year than in May of last year. Among young men the rate is 20.3 per cent. Students looking for work this summer have little or no hope of finding summer jobs.

What positive news does the minister have today for the youth and women of Canada who are desperately searching for employment?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, when the hon. member talks about women—and in his earlier question he referred to 1984—he should also add that since 1984 it is close to one million; 890,000 more women are working today than in September 1984 and 71.5 per cent of the jobs created for women since September 1984 are full-time jobs. That is an improvement over the era when his party governed Canada.

• (1120)

He is asking: "What are we doing for those people today?" He seems to imply that we take solace in the fact that people are unemployed. Not at all.

We are working on the fundamentals of the economy being right, not on having a quick-fix solution, throwing money at the problem, giving them make-work projects and then having them on welfare again. We are working to create solid, sustainable, long-term jobs and this is what the budget of my colleague, the Minister of Finance, will achieve for Canada.

Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston): Mr. Speaker, this minister is not hoodwinking Canadians into believing that this government is providing the necessary leadership in order to put people back to work.

It is clear that this government does not know what it is doing on the unemployment front. It is paralysed. It is ad libbing its way through the worst economic crisis since the Depression.

He referred to the budget. Let us look at the budget the Minister of Finance handed down just a few short months ago, in February.

In that budget, the Minister of Finance said that the unemployment rate this year would average 10.3 per cent. In January, it was 10.4 per cent; in February, 10.6 per cent; in March, 11.1 per cent; in April, 11 per cent;