

Employment

the United Auto Workers said that there is a definite increase in the incidence of alcoholism and family problems, among the unemployed autoworkers. This is what happens when unemployment occurs.

Mr. Kelly: What are your policies, Flora?

Miss MacDonald: A recent report in the *Ottawa Citizen* stated that one in every 20 Canadian adult drinkers is alcohol-addicted, and this number can be expected to go up as the economy goes down. The report quotes a counsellor who has worked with alcoholics for 20 years as saying there is a direct correlation between unemployment and alcoholism because of the pressures unemployment puts on family life.

A Toronto study indicates that a widespread incidence of wife-battering and child abuse are tragic consequences of prolonged unemployment. The director of a family services bureau in Toronto said that he found, in dealing with clients who have been unemployed for some time, that many have been on edge and that any stress or difficulties tend to push them over the edge. Frustrations are sometimes taken out on the children, who are defenceless.

As well, there has been a distressing increase in the number of suicides over the past few years. For example, the Ottawa distress centre received over 900 calls threatening suicide in 1981, while two or three years ago, many fewer calls were received. The centre's director is concerned that as the unemployment situation becomes more severe and as the economy slips into deeper recession, the number of suicides will increase drastically.

Mr. Kelly: That is a distortion of the facts.

Miss MacDonald: Family breakdown, suicide, wife-battering and alcoholism are tragic companions of unemployment.

Mr. McDermid: Why were those facts not in your speech?

Miss MacDonald: It was my hope to hear the minister and other members of the Liberal Party outline this afternoon what the government proposes to do to start coping with the tremendous problem that all of us want to see remedied. I had hoped he would bring forward some proposals and follow the lead taken by the hon. member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie) in recognizing what is truly a monumental problem, and would recognize the fundamental shifts which we are going through in the economy, shifts which require the minister and his government to come up with imaginative new methods of job creation in order to alleviate today's terrible situation. What we need from the minister is a new sense of direction and a new spirit of co-operation. Instead, we had an exhibition from a person who was unable to cope with the magnitude of the problem which confronts him. Instead, he falls back on the defensive and lashes out at anyone and everyone in a desperate attempt to shift the blame. The minister blamed the other industrialized countries, he blamed the opposition, he blamed South Africa, he blamed foreign policy—whoever he could. But he gave us very little of a positive nature to show that the

government is seriously trying to reverse the increasing unemployment.

I ask: what comfort, what consolation or hope does this kind of diatribe offer to the more than one million unemployed? It would be much better if the minister would face up to the hard facts about the economy. The basic fact is this: high interest rates drive up unemployment.

We heard all the provincial premiers saying the same thing this week; only the federal government was out of step. The fact that high interest rates drive up unemployment is particularly true in the manufacturing sector. When the economy is tight, people do not have the money to spend on commodities, and when these commodities are not being purchased, the manufacturing plants cut back on production. This is certainly apparent in my riding of Kingston and the Islands where over 850 workers have been laid off in six different manufacturing plants since October of last year. The number of unemployment insurance claims for the week of January 29 had increased by some 18 per cent over the same period last year. Between January 1 and January 18 there was an increase of 10 per cent in welfare claims in my constituency. That is only one constituency, but it is happening all across Canada.

Figures do not tell the whole story. In fact, all too often statistics try to smooth out what is a much more tragic situation. We are inclined to forget the faces behind those figures, the thousands who are forced to accept handouts, when what they really want is jobs.

● (2030)

A woman called from my constituency today and told me of the difficulties she and her husband are facing. Both of them had been in good jobs and had looked forward to a secure future. They were buying a home, and then suddenly both of them were laid off because of circumstances well beyond their control; and their mortgage payments were increased. She said: "How can we get ourselves out of this situation? We didn't ask for it. We had been conscientious, hard-working people, and suddenly we face this calamity."

What can we tell people like that at this critical period of their lives? Are we to tell them there will be many job-creation projects for them when, indeed, there are so few? In fact, the money currently being spent on job-creation projects is about \$143 million, when the unemployment figure is 8.6 per cent. Do hon. members know that back in 1971 when the unemployment rate was much lower, at 6 per cent, the government spent \$339 million on direct job creation? But now when the situation is much worse, the government cuts back.

I want to say just a few words about the unemployment situation as it applies to women in particular because there is great uncertainty for women in the labour force at the present time, but looking down the road it appears that the situation may be much worse. Some 50 per cent of all Canadian women now work, but by the year 2000 some 75 per cent of Canadian women are expected to be working, and that means five out of every ten workers will be women.