

Federal-Provincial Relations

Further on, Mr. Speaker, on page 2—

Mr. Béchard: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Valade: The hon. member will be able to ask his question afterwards.

On page 2 of the same text, Mr. Speaker, we find the following:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I regret having to interrupt the honourable member but his allotted time has now expired although the Chair has allowed him an extra minute because of the question of privilege which was raised.

[English]

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, the motion by the Social Credit party refers to the deterioration of federal-provincial relations and blames it on the unilateral decisions of the federal government and its refusal to meet the legitimate needs of Canadian provinces. I can support that motion because it is obvious today, as it has been for some time, that this is a government which does not believe in consultation. It is a government which makes unilateral decisions regardless of the serious consequential effects of its decisions.

Let me deal with some of these decisions and their effects on people of this country. The most important decision made by this government, one which has had disastrous and divisive effects on our people, was the decision made some 2½ years ago that the most important thing we had to do was fight inflation, and to fight inflation we could afford unemployment. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said in a press interview that he would not be deterred from his anti-inflationary policies even if it meant 6 per cent unemployment. He succeeded beautifully, because in almost every month for two years or more we have had 6 per cent or higher unemployment on a seasonally adjusted basis.

I could not help being impressed by the eloquent and passionate speech made earlier this afternoon by the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand). I was interested, not in what he said but, rather, in what he did not say. It was not an accident. Here is a cabinet minister who came to this House after having served as the president of one of the major labour organizations in the province of Quebec. He made a major speech today and did not mention unemployment.

• (2100)

What is the record? The minister told us how great this country is doing and how wonderful everything is. Well, for May of 1972, 552,000 persons were unemployed. This figure is almost 10,000 more than the figure for May of last year. On a seasonally adjusted basis the unemployment figure was 6.2 per cent, compared to 6.3 per cent for May, 1971. What about the minister's province? He did not talk about it, but in the province of Quebec in May of 1972 there were 206,000 people unemployed. This figure is 10,000 more than the figure for the previous year.

Mr. Osler: How many were there last month?

[Mr. Valade.]

Mr. Orlikow: The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre (Mr. Osler) is making the same type of useless interjection that he so frequently makes.

Mr. Osler: How many were there last month, compared to the month before?

Mr. Orlikow: There may be members of this House who are more stupid than the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre, but they have enough brains to keep their mouths shut. The hon. member knows, or he ought to know if he knows anything, that one compares unemployment by relating one month to the same month in the year before. There were 10,000 more people unemployed in the province of Quebec in May, 1972, than there were in May, 1971. The seasonally adjusted rate of unemployment in the province of Quebec in May, 1972, was 8.1 per cent.

The Minister of Regional Economic Expansion did not mention a word about this. I want to compare the silence of the minister today with the type of statements he made before he came to this House. I have in my hand a copy of a memorandum submitted by the Confederation of National Trade Unions to the federal cabinet in February, 1964, when the minister was president of that organization. I wish to quote a few paragraphs from the section dealing with unemployment. This memorandum reads:

In Canada, there is no such thing as the right to work for a great number of citizens. Hundreds of thousands of Canadian workers are either unemployed, insufficiently paid, or worrying about the day when they will be told that their services are no more required.

It does not seem that the privileged group who is not suffering from unemployment is much disturbed by the chronic aspect of mass unemployment in Canada.

Obviously, the minister is one of the privileged group so he no longer needs to worry about mass unemployment as he did in 1964. Further in the statement we find these words:

In Canada, and most particularly in Quebec and in the Maritimes, unemployment rates exceeding 7 per cent and 10 per cent merely bring a few compassionate speeches and generous projects—

As I pointed out, unemployment last month in the province of Quebec, on a seasonally adjusted basis, was 8.1 per cent—and we do not even get compassionate speeches from the ex-president of the Confederation of National Trade Unions now that he is a minister. In this statement the minister closes by saying:

The state should concern itself above all with directing and orienting the economy and the distribution of wealth and with establishing conditions that ensure full employment and social security.

If ever there was a minister who forgot the things he spoke of before he entered politics, it is the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. The decision of the federal government, that unemployment was not important, was a unilateral decision. There were provinces which were concerned, and there are now provinces which are concerned. There were provinces which called on the federal government, and there are provinces which are now calling on the federal government, to do something about unemployment. Let me quote one paragraph from a statement made by the Premier of Manitoba to the federal-provincial conference held in Ottawa from November 15 to November 17, 1971: