

Alleged Failure to Improve Economy

attempt to see, if a plant is set up in location "A", that harm is not being caused to a plant in location "B". There is no attempt to integrate a plan of economic development in disadvantaged areas. There is simply a pork barrel from which large sums of public money are paid out, 67 per cent of which is paid to large multinational corporations. The remaining 33 per cent is paid to other corporations which need it just as badly. If this money were used to fight inflation by compensating the poor who are hurt by it, a great deal more would be done for the economy of Canada than by these colossal, meaningless and harmful handouts to the corporations which pay funds into the Liberal party's election coffers.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Lewis: Third, I say to the government that even though the housing program has been improved a great deal, the housing needs of this country are almost limitless. A large infusion of capital to build homes, particularly for the low-income groups, to construct public housing, to renew urban settlements and so on, would create jobs and wealth in this country which would really be worthwhile. We have not done nearly enough. We have not done 10 per cent of what needs to be done, even with the increased capital of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Fourth, I say we have in this country immense needs at this time in addition to housing. We have pollution problems which require a massive infusion of capital, particularly for the municipalities which do not have any funds and which have inadequate sewage treatment plants. Until such time as we do something in this area, much of our pollution difficulty will remain and the speeches by ministers of the crown and Members of Parliament generally will be merely expressions of a pious hope. That is another area where jobs could be created, and where the quality of life of the Canadian people could be immediately improved, if the federal government had any imagination or concern for the welfare of the ordinary people.

Finally, I say—and there are many other points I could cite—that our whole tie-up in the American economic straitjacket, our dependence on the multi-national corporations for research and development and the fact that our natural resources are owned mainly by these corporations, not only American but British and Japanese, has meant we have exported jobs. We have failed in respect of what we ought to do in society which is build viable communities in northern Ontario, northern Saskatchewan, northern Quebec, northern Manitoba and parts of the Atlantic provinces. We should be building viable communities around the natural resources by placing at these locations the refining, smelting and processing plants as well as manufacturing plants that would enable the development of those communities. These are some suggestions I make to the Minister of Finance and to the government, but I have no hope that they will be accepted.

● (4:00 p.m.)

I have no hope that the government will change its policy because, as I have said on many occasions and I

[Mr. Lewis.]

mean it profoundly, I do not think this country has ever had a more conservative government, tied to the principles of the corporate control of the economy, than the government headed by the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau). I do not believe that this country has ever had a government more given to looking at curves, diagrams, tables, constructions and technocratic details to the detriment of the welfare of the Canadian people than this government. I am quite certain that the governor of the Bank of Canada, the chairman of the Prices and Incomes Commission and all the other out of date economic advisers, will have much more influence with the Minister of Finance than we in this corner of the House can have.

History will record the immense harm which has been done, not only to the economy generally but to the life of so many millions of people in this country. Tonight, we intend to show our displeasure, at least at the workings of John Young and his little band of economic gravediggers, by voting against the supplementary estimate for Dr. Young's little band. I hope that others who see the situation in Canada, and have the courage to declare themselves, will join us in denying this wasteful amount of money to a wasteful, unnecessary, useless and harmful so-called commission.

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, more than ever it can truly be said that we live in a mad world and that we are being governed by the most remarkable of these madmen.

We have now been engaged for several weeks in debates on the economic situation in Canada, increasing unemployment, problems of product marketing and so on. Furthermore we see flagrant contradictions between the utterances of government members and those of official opposition members, we have heard proposals which have been tried, without result leading the opposition to put forward the motion now before the House.

Officially, there were 675,000 idle Canadians in February; 1,800,000 students will soon be looking for summer jobs. According to unofficial statistics on other unemployed; they number 200,000 or 250,000, which gives a total of nearly 2.5 million people who will be looking for work within a few weeks.

In view of this situation and for a year and a half we have often heard the government say: We have to fight inflation, therefore we will restrict credit. We shall ask the Canadian people to tighten their belts. The result has been a greater number of unemployed. A few months later, on December 24 last, the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) said and I quote:

[English]

We've Licked Inflation: PM

Prime Minister Trudeau said flatly Wednesday: "Inflation no longer exists in Canada".

[Translation]

He also said the economic recovery would take place in a few weeks.