

Economic Policies and Unemployment

Canada and I have visited my constituency on the last three weekends. However, I felt unemployment was important enough to stay and discuss this matter.

Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West): You live here.

Mr. Perrault: I have a residence in my constituency as well.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member has the floor and he should be given an opportunity to continue his remarks.

Mr. Perrault: In this fight against unemployment and inflation, most of the opposition members are draft-dodgers. More of them should be in this House, on this designated official opposition day, to discuss this matter. During the past few hours we have heard the same shabby, shoddy and shopworn slogans about unemployment that we have listened to for several months.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): What are we getting now?

Mr. Perrault: We have higher unemployment in this country. The levels are not satisfactory. As Canadians, regardless of party ties, we have a responsibility to create as many jobs as possible and as soon as possible. Very little is to be gained by raking over slogans and making empty accusations against a government which has initiated more new programs in the past few months to provide long-term solutions to this problem than in any comparable era in Canadian history.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Perrault: I have a document issued by an organization with headquarters in Paris. The name of the organization is OECD. What does the OECD say about Canada's efforts? In this report mention is made of the action of the Canadian government to rapidly develop a manpower policy. The article is written in terms of the excellent progress being made in Canada by the government to fight unemployment and to develop methods designed to promote structural improvements of the economy. There is reference to the federally-supported accelerated training and retraining program for adults. Training within industry and management training are encouraged. There is reference to the regional development program.

[Mr. Perrault.]

One of the tasks of this international organization is to compare the economic performance of the nations of the world. This organization speaks in high praise of Canada's regional development program, tax incentives and the training of manpower adjustment measures. The report refers in glowing terms to the new geographic mobility program which gives loans and grants to unemployed workers willing to move in order to take jobs. Transitional assistance benefits are given to workers affected by the United States-Canada agreement on liberalism of trade. This report states that a consultative service is being built to help solve problems connected with technical change at the plant level. This document has not been published by Information Canada, nor the National Trade Federation. It is published by OECD, an organization which is surely respected by even the opposition parties. This organization is not interested in bringing to bear partisan, narrow criticism against the government. It merely reports the facts about countries such as Belgium, Austria, Ireland, Switzerland, Luxembourg, France, etc. It recognizes Canada as one of the leaders in developing programs to help people obtain jobs. Anyone listening to the debate this afternoon could only conclude that Canada is an economic wasteland, devoid of all hope.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Perrault: The applause by the opposition which greeted that remark indicates why they will never be the government in the foreseeable future. They have no confidence in the country. It is fair to conclude that the same opposition members gleefully look on each DBS report as political ammunition.

Mr. Crouse: You learned that from Paul Martin.

Mr. Perrault: The opposition should consider their responsibility here to propose alternative programs. All day they have been combing statistics for as much gloom, doom and disaster as possible. If it is possible to reach a negative effect by any statistics, the opposition will do it. In this wasteland of words there has not been one syllable of a suggestion for any alternative program. As a chap said the other day, all the ideas of the opposition to fight inflation and unemployment could be printed on the back of a postage stamp, with big wide margins.