

*Unemployment*

The debate has, unhappily, savoured too much of a repetition of what we heard last year when the opposition, and indeed the people of Canada, frustrated and angry at not knowing the solution and not knowing the government policy, saw a smug and lethargic government mouthing platitudes. Some of these are worth considering. The Minister of Labour (Mr. Gregg), for instance, said that the federal government has a duty to sponsor national policies that will encourage a high level of employment. What he said was true, but we have tried in vain to find out what those policies are. Two ministers have spoken, and neither has enlightened us. They both praised the past and carefully forgot the present and the future.

As I said, the minister believed the government should sponsor national policies which would encourage a high level of employment. The government may argue that today there is a high level of employment, but the fact remains there are between 600,000 and 700,000 unemployed and we still do not know what is the answer of this government to the all-absorbing domestic problem which confronts us. The minister said that we should look at these facts quietly and sanely. But what sort of sanity is this on the part of a government which permits, and apparently willingly permits, homes in this country to be broken up, for that is the net effect of unemployment as anyone who has been through it must know. Part of the Liberal clap-trap which we have been fed repeatedly, especially around election time, is this stuff about the sanctity of the family.

What can we say about a government which professes to believe in the sanctity of the family and yet, as a deliberate act of policy, permits those families to be destroyed and broken up as we know they have been, from evidence which has been adduced. In an attempt to secure municipal relief for their families men are leaving them and going heaven knows where. Young men who have to make a way for themselves in life are leaving their homes and going from one town to another. They are unwelcome visitors, and all too frequently are given a railway ticket to some other town so the municipality can avoid paying for their cost of living while they are unemployed.

Today we heard some objection taken by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Drew) to a remark of my colleague, the hon. member for Nanaimo (Mr. Cameron), who said that the miseries of the unemployed were being obscured in other clap-trap about liberty. There have been a tremendous number of crimes committed in the name of liberty, and

a tremendous number of clichés hurled at us in the name of liberty. But there are various concepts of liberty, Mr. Speaker, for I maintain that it is possible to be bodily free yet still enslaved. The great mass of Canadian workers who are today compelled to live in the thralldom of fear of what may happen to them tomorrow are not free men. But liberty certainly may have some meaning. There is the liberty to go to the soup kitchen, the liberty to be unemployed, the liberty to travel from town to town looking for work. Liberty, as I construe it, means something vastly more than that. Liberty in a modern democratic state must take into consideration the liberty of a man's spirit and soul, as well as the liberty of his body.

As I have said in the past in this house, poverty has caused more hurt and more harm in this world than all the wars which have yet been fought. But the government apparently does not realize that the poverty which arises from unemployment is more than detrimental to the family. It can destroy the individual in a more fearsome way than any nuclear weapons, in that weapons can destroy the body while what arises from unemployment will destroy a man's mind, a man's soul. We have seen that happen too often in the past.

Then another extraordinary aspect of the government's attitude toward this problem was in this statement that many unemployed workers have already been assisted by family allowance payments and old age pensions. In other words the government is depending upon robbing children to see that the unemployment problem is alleviated. I thought the purpose of these family allowances was to help children, not give some sort of subsistence to the unemployed. The statement says that the unemployed are being assisted by the old age pension. That is a wonderful source of solace to those over 70 who still are compelled to work because the pittance given them by this government as a pension is so utterly and completely inadequate. The fact remains that the government has no policy.

At page 1630 of *Hansard* the Minister of Trade and Commerce said in this debate that productive activity has not been sufficient to absorb the net increase in persons coming into the labour force. If that is so, what is the minister's policy? What is the government's policy to make the productive activity sufficient to absorb the tens and hundreds of thousands of Canadians in this country who want work and who cannot get it because the government has no policy?