

The Budget—Mr. Deans

The British pension system is a dossier on which I have been working for six years without much success yet. Both the Labour government and Conservative government in Great Britain up to now have not agreed to index their pensions. I think they owe it to the British pensioners wherever they are in life or geographically because they have already paid for it through income taxes. Every chance that I have or that Hon. Members have—and I must say that has been done very well in Canada—to press upon Great Britain the urgency of giving their own pensioners indexation of their own pensions is appreciated and much needed. I am confident that we will succeed and that some unblocking of the dossier will take place.

I think pressure is needed to make the British Government understand that this is not a privilege but a right, in the sense that these British pensioners living in Canada have paid for an indexed pension. Therefore where is the indexation of their pension?

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): Order! The Hon. Member for Laval.

I must point out that there is only about one minute left for questions and comments.

Mr. Roy: Mr. Speaker, I shall be very brief. I am particularly concerned about the portability of pension plans within the private sector. I would like to ask the Minister how the portability of pension plans within the private sector was received by employers at the hearings conducted by the Committee throughout the province. What was the attitude towards the portability of pension plans in the private sector?

Miss Bégin: Mr. Speaker, although I do not have a summary of the hearings before me, I can inform the Member for Laval that generally speaking, this is the point the private sector has the least trouble with, namely, portability when a person changes jobs and has vested interests, because the two go together. In English this is called portability investing, and according to our model, it would be after about two years. Right now, the rule in the private sector is that after ten years if the person is 45 years old or over, that person will recover what he paid into a pension fund. Now we want this to be the rule after two years.

[English]

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, in discussing the Budget I cannot help but go back to the Budget afternoon when I thought, as I listened to the presentation, how disappointing the document was. Over the course of the last year I had identified in my mind where the serious problems of Canada's economy lay. You will recall that on numerous occasions my colleagues and I raised the questions of unemployment, the difficulties of people whose incomes were not sufficient to meet their needs, the problems of those who had been on unemployment insurance but who no longer qualified for it. We tried to put before the House the bleak and dismal future that many of those people faced. It did not matter whether they were workers who had devoted 10, 15, 20 and sometimes 30 or more years to a job; they were facing the loss of it and, in the process, found themselves without income

because they had exhausted their unemployment insurance benefits. They found themselves without income because they had exhausted their unemployment insurance benefits. They found themselves in the situation where, even if the spouse was working, it was often a part-time job at the minimum wage. The amount earned was insufficient to allow them to maintain their residence and provide for their family in the way they had not only become accustomed to but which would allow them to meet their obligations.

We expected that the Government would recognize that problem, which is a very serious one. In bringing forward its proposals for the fiscal management of the country and in its response to the serious problems of the country, we expected that the Government would at least have come to grips with the difficulties that those people face. It was not so. It was not there. There was nothing to give those people any hope.

On two or three occasions, the latest one yesterday afternoon, the Minister admitted that there was no likelihood of the economy being able to produce the number of jobs necessary for the 1.5 million people who are now unemployed. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) made it quite clear yesterday and last week, and in the weeks preceding the Budget, that he did not expect that the public or private economy would be able to create in sufficient numbers the job opportunities to meet the needs of the youth who were coming out of the educational system with high hopes. There will be no opportunity for these young people to utilize the education that they worked so hard to attain.

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We in this Party thought that perhaps there would be some suggestion in the Budget which would address the shortfall, those people who stand between the number of jobs which can legitimately be created and the number of people who are unemployed, and that shortfall would undoubtedly be up in the hundreds of thousands. But there was nothing for them. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I was very disappointed on Budget day; then I became angry, and by the time I raised my question with the Minister of Finance yesterday. I was back to the point of feeling total frustration in trying to get through to the Government what its responsibilities really are.

I pointed out yesterday that some 50 per cent to 60 per cent of all construction workers in the Hamilton area are now unemployed. The unemployment rate among electrical workers is 70 per cent. The unemployment rate for steelworkers, the backbone of the community I represent and of the surrounding communities, is 20 per cent. These people do not have the money for additional payments into RRSPs. They do not have an income which allows them to sock away some money for their old age. They do not have a job which will enable them to meet their day-to-day commitments, let alone to put away some money for the future in some kind of tax relief scheme.

These people do not qualify for a reduction in their federal income tax—from the 45 per cent level to a 15 per cent level—