

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

I might say there is considerable concrete evidence to support this charge. First of all, if the offers announced by the end of 1970 had resulted in the number of jobs predicted for them, 18,537 jobs would have been created; 4,454 of these jobs have vanished because of withdrawn or declined offers or bankruptcies. Applying this proportion to the total number of expected jobs announced since the beginning of this incentives program, it can be predicted that at least 13,500 of the jobs announced to date will have been lost by the end of this year.

The so-called net expected job total used by the department represents the subtraction from the total announcements of only the 5,095 jobs lost through withdrawn or declined offers revealed thus far. This procedure results in an overestimation of approximately 8,400 "expected jobs".

• (2210)

In this particular case we were able to expose the minister, but how many more offers have been announced which later have been withdrawn or cancelled secretly? How many hundreds of workers have been laid off by firms subsidized by DREE or by other firms unable to compete with those subsidized by DREE?

Second, in DREE's 1970-71 annual report released two weeks ago the number of jobs estimated from grants under the former Area Development Incentives Act is 22 per cent lower than the number claimed in the report issued last year: 12,264 expected jobs have been lost. This, again, demonstrates the misleading use made of these "expected job" figures by the department.

I call on the minister to stop misleading the public and this House with his talk of estimated jobs. I call on him to reveal the number of jobs actually in existence as a result of the \$244 million which this government has paid out in incentives grants to firms since 1968. The minister refuses to talk of the actual total of jobs created; he talks only of imaginary expected jobs.

But there is a further issue: I contend that the minister, in his answer to the member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. McBride), misled the House since the minister himself admitted outside the House that he had received notice of the question. In other words, it was a planted question designed to get the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton off the hook politically.

What happened between that day early in 1971 when the acceptance of the offer was announced with great fanfare and February 11, 1972—a year later—when the offer was secretly withdrawn? Why did this firm decline what amounted to an outright gift from the federal government? Was it because of the political consequences to the Liberal party in Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton which would flow from the closing down of the Findlay plant, with a loss of 200 jobs in Carleton Place? This would appear to be the case.

Only the minister can get the record straight, and I call on him now to do so. I realize he cannot be expected to do so in the three minutes that he has at his disposal during this adjournment debate, but he can do so, as we have repeatedly asked him to do so, by making a statement on motions which would have to stand up to the scrutiny of the opposition parties in the House.

[Mr. McGrath.]

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion): Mr. Speaker, I feel that the debates in this House can only bear fruit if all the members of the opposition as well as government members at least accept the facts, especially those that are known, that are public knowledge.

The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) asked that a debate be held this evening on the matter of the Bélanger-Tappan Ltd. Plant, and more specifically on the closing down of the Findlays Ltd. Plant. He has spoken of anything but that; in other words, he attempted to give statistical interpretations. I have absolutely no intention of discussing the matter in the few minutes I am allowed.

I say simply and maintain, Mr. Speaker, that if the type of question that was brought up tonight could be regularly accepted in this House, then the institution would no longer have any meaning.

Mr. Speaker, this is the fourth time since Monday that I have stated in the House that never has a grant been made to Bélanger-Tappan Limited. Never, at any time! The hon. member has reiterated the same assertion, that I could sum up this way:

[English]

The hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. McBride) on Monday last referred to a grant paid to the firm of A. Belanger Ltée. The hon. member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath) knows very well that no grant was ever paid. He said that because he knows very well that some newspaperman would put it in print. That was his only reason. I do not see why he insists. He might interpret these statistics as much as he wants; I do not mind.

[Translation]

That is his business. Let him make his interpretations and I shall make mine. That is the normal play of democracy. But that he should systematically make a statement contrary to facts and continue to assert it, I consider then he is destroying in the process something more serious than the little cause he wants to defend, and that is what I cannot admit.

If the hon. member for St. John's East says there will not be as many jobs created as the minister claims, well, I can't swear to it on the Bible. I can only interpret, as he himself does. On that point, Mr. Speaker, I accept the debate, but on the other point I reject it. It is not proper either for those involved, for the government or for the opposition. Why waste the time of the House this evening saying such things? The hon. member is upset because the hon. member for Lanark-Renfrew-Carleton (Mr. McBride) gave me notice of the question. But, Mr. Speaker, it is common knowledge that even opposition members give us notice of some questions they intend to put. In fact, it even happened to the hon. member for St. John's East. What is dishonest about that?

What matters is whether the reply is right. There is only one simple reply: no grant has been given; the hon.