

Unemployment

interests are mutual and interdependent. Our agricultural producers realize that only by federal action can their major economic problems be solved.

One of the best methods by which we can meet the unemployment problem in this country is by the stabilization of our agricultural industry. That stabilization will only come about when agricultural producers are guaranteed a fair return for what they produce, so they in turn will be able to buy the products of the effort and ingenuity of labour. Surely it is absurd to believe that the government can continue to ignore this fact. Surely the government realizes that to let farm income decline, with its accompanying unemployment, is to court economic disaster.

The proposal to stabilize agriculture, coupled with the many other proposals made by this group, can lead to a solution to the serious and ever-growing unemployment problem. What is needed is a completely new approach. Based on past experience, the present program of the government to cope with the problem, as spelled out by the minister, is doomed to failure.

Mr. John Hunter (Parkdale): Mr. Speaker, I am entering this debate because I think it concerns a matter of importance. There appears to be a divergence of opinion as to the seriousness of unemployment in the country, but whether one speaker regards it as serious and another as not serious, I am of the school who think there is a serious problem.

I have listened to the debate with great interest, and have read the speeches I missed hearing. In my opinion one speech that made a great contribution to the debate was that of the hon. member for Spadina (Mr. Croll). I listened to another member from the city of Toronto today, the hon. member for Eglinton. I found his speech very long on rancour and very short on ideas.

The question has been raised by a number of people whether the present unemployment is seasonal, regional or a combination of a number of things. I think the truth is obvious, that it is a combination of a number of things. There is definitely some seasonal unemployment, and there will always be seasonal unemployment in a country in our latitude and with our climate. But I think to say at this stage that unemployment today is only seasonal or regional is simply not paying attention to the facts. There is definitely unemployment in the country today which is not seasonal or regional, and anybody who refuses to face that fact is just not being realistic.

[Mr. Bryson.]

We all know that the textile business is flat, that the farm implement business is at least semi-flat, and that the automobile business is in a precarious state. The demand for automobiles is not as great and the supply is greater, with the result that for dealers to sell automobiles at the terrific rate at which they are being produced today they are having to give special discounts, and it may well be that before long the automobile business will have to lay off some employees. I sincerely hope not, but it could happen. To simply stand here and say that this is a seasonal or regional problem is not treating the problem fairly.

In my own constituency there is substantial unemployment. I am not for one moment prepared to accept the figures put forward by some members of the opposition, which I think are very unfair—and I think they know they are unfair—but at the same time it is in my opinion extremely dangerous to minimize the problem. I think it just as dangerous and pretty unscrupulous to magnify it. People talk about whose responsibility the problem is. I do not think there is any question of whose responsibility it is in the eyes of the people of Canada. When the federal government went to Westminster and got an amendment to the British North America Act in order to pass the Unemployment Insurance Act, the people of Canada immediately assumed that the federal government was accepting unemployment as its responsibility, and to take any other attitude is simply disagreeing with the people of Canada. The people of Canada believe it is a federal problem.

An hon. Member: And it is.

Mr. Hunter: I do not say it is constitutionally. Constitutionally the provincial governments have complete and exclusive legislative jurisdiction over property and civil rights and many other things. But let us not talk about it as if it were a constitutional problem. Let us face the fact that the people of Canada regard it as a federal problem.

Having accepted that premise, which many may not but which I believe to be the view of the people of Canada, then it becomes a question of the provincial and federal governments getting together. Obviously if the federal government, by reason of the wishes of the people of Canada, is to accept responsibility for employment and unemployment in the country, it must also be given the tools to do the job. If the provinces have certain tools which are required to do the