

The Canadian Economy

I am bothered about the loss of production, Mr. Speaker, and I should like to read the following: It has been estimated that for every 1 per cent of unemployment increase in the range 4 per cent to 7 per cent, a country such as Canada loses some 3 per cent of gross national product. Taking a level of full employment, for example, of 3 per cent would mean that we are losing each year, at present levels of unemployment, some 6.9 per cent of gross national product. This may not sound a lot, but if I tell you that this represents some \$5 billion worth of goods lost each year to the Canadian public—that is almost \$250 lost to each Canadian man, woman and child—by the obstinacy, stupidity and arrogance of the Canadian government, you will see that there is an urgent need to change the policies and the men who lead this country. I say that with a great deal of sincerity.

Mr. Mahoney: We know what the people of Ontario are thinking.

Mr. Alexander: Is that the same overpriced Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Mahoney)? He is the axeman, Mr. Speaker, the one who goes around the country telling the Canadian people how well the economy is doing. If the economy is doing so well, why do we have to find this \$1 billion tonight?

Mr. Benson: Because the economy is good.

Mr. Alexander: I cannot understand how it can be said the economy is booming when we have to find \$1 billion. Mr. Speaker, I see my time has just about run out—

Mr. Perrault: It sure has.

Mr. Alexander: That was the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Perrault), a man whom I respect. There is only one thing wrong—he has a big mouth. He should get up and make some suggestions, instead of continually sitting there nattering and making nonsensical interjections.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, for the life of me I cannot understand why it took this government so long to realize that the country was approaching a crisis before it had the gumption or even the brains to bring in these programs. Unfortunately, the type of program they brought in with respect to moneys going to the provincial governments and the municipalities takes time. I think they made a bad mistake in waiting until now before bringing in this program which we all hope will relieve some of the suffering and deprivation with which so many Canadians have been confronted for too long.

Mr. Steven Otto (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Supply and Services): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member for Chambly (Mr. L'Heureux) who made a speech tonight.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Otto: When I made my maiden speech it was in 1962 and I sat in the opposition benches.

An hon. Member: It seems like yesterday.

Mr. Otto: I know that some of the frontbenchers on this side are still wondering which side of the House I am on.

From time to time they must think I am still in the opposition benches, but believe me it is not my fault.

An hon. Member: You will have a different speech tonight.

Mr. Otto: In this Parliament especially, I think a good opposition member is required because—I hate to say this—

Mr. Woolliams: Go ahead. I can take it.

Mr. Otto: —of the lackadaisical manner of the opposition.

It was two weeks ago tonight that I spoke on the U.S. surcharge and the DISC program, and I recall that I had some tough words to say about the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson).

An hon. Member: He is leaving now.

Mr. Otto: I think that is only fair and I do not think anyone in the House can accuse me of not telling it as it is.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Woolliams: But you always vote with them. You never put your vote where your mouth is.

Mr. Otto: In order to tell it as it is, I will say that the minister made a good speech tonight and the policy is a good one.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: Which one?

Mr. Woolliams: That \$4,000 really changed your thinking.

An hon. Member: It really fixed you up, Steven.

Mr. Bell: You are getting more like the member for Calgary South (Mr. Mahoney) all the time.

Mr. Otto: I hear comments from the other side, but I can assure them that the position I am supposed to be elevated to is not going to change my feeling about the government. I believe that if the government is right—and it is in this case, as I am going to explain—then it should be given full credit. At the same time, I was very disappointed.

I heard every speech of the opposition. I was disappointed to hear the opposition rehashing old potatoes or rehashing yesterday's speeches, as you might say. They told us what they said one month ago or two months ago, and they could have criticized constructively. That is what they should have done, but what did we hear? In speech after speech we were told that 7.1 per cent of our people are unemployed, that unemployment could rise and that unemployment should be much less. Yet, with regard to those issues that were mentioned by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson), there was no constructive criticism.

• (12:10 a.m.)

Mr. Horner: Cannot the hon. member do better than that.

Mr. Otto: For the sake of hon. members opposite and for this side as well, may I relate briefly the position in which