

Supply

was not getting any better. Russell Harrison, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, said in a speech this week that if this country did not prevent division within it, it will not be able to respond to the challenges of the 1980s and 1990s.

● (1210)

Across the country more and more people are beginning to understand that unless we can forge a national consensus, what politicians, bureaucrats and opinion leaders talk about will merely be at the level of chat. It will not be effective because there is not within us yet a will to establish that national consensus. I might say that when most people talk about national consensus they are really referring to what I would call the larger pieces of society. Normally we are talking about the relationship of Government, business and labour. In the last 15 years the sad but true fact is that relationships between the Government and business have deteriorated to a low which has never been seen before in the history of Canada. This is undeniable.

The priorities of the business sector are simple—growth, employment and price stability. Those used to be the goals of the federal Government prior to 1968. Indeed, it was Mr. Harrison, the banker, who said that what happened in the past number of years was that this federal Government had broken the historical consensus which allowed the country to have some kind of progress and prosperity for its people. It is this Government which has broken the historical consensus that was necessary for business to flourish, for growth to occur, for jobs to begin and for stability to be with us once again.

In the past two years we have seen budgets based only on the premise that the Government can do best and that business and labour do not. We have seen policies which stifled initiative and a continuation of the concept within bureaucracy and the Government that if it is not the Government that does it then it is not important. This kind of philosophy has contributed to the awesome deterioration between the Government and business enterprises in the country.

If the Government has been bad for business, it has been deplorable for labour. There has been no labour policy in Canada for 15 years. Labour has no place at the national table with the Government. Mark Daniels, no stranger to the House, is the Deputy Minister of Labour. At the University of Toronto on Monday he said that the labour factor has been ignored for over 15 years in federal Government decisions, that labour issues have not been a part of policy planning and that it was one of the federal Government's great failures. Those comments were made by the federal Deputy Minister of Labour.

On Wednesday a conference held by the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) was concluded. It was the National Occupations Outlook Conference. One would expect that an opportunity would have been provided for labour to play a full role and that there would have been an acceptance of labour as a national part of the way in which we can get out of the recession and into a new period of prosperi-

ty. Did labour have a role? "No", said the federal Government.

Let us look at the response from labour. As far as it is concerned, this week at the conference the role of labour was blatantly biased and denigrated. The entire conference was to deal with a program known as COPS, a computer system concerned with monitoring and projecting labour needs of the future. The program was developed after the federal Government rejected a proposal by business and labour, the Canadian Labour Congress and the Business Council on National Issues.

Three years ago, the Business Council on National Issues, in concert with the CLC, came to the federal Government and said that they would like to participate. The federal Government delayed and delayed and finally denied and rejected one of the few occasions in recent history where business and labour came together. They were scuttled by the Government. Is it any wonder that labour and business find that they have no connection with the Liberal Government and that they have had no connection with it for the past 15 years?

When people talk about national consensus, they are now increasingly not only talking about the relationship of business, labour and Government. They are also talking, perhaps much more fundamentally, about the relationship of Canadians one with the other. Those of us who had the opportunity to read the letter from the Bishops, the so-called "Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis", and to think about it and discuss it, would offer a thanks to the Bishops for reminding not only us but, more important, the Government that economic issues are social issues and that social issues are moral issues; that economic decisions are also moral choices.

In passing, it reminds me that Adam Smith, the great chronicler and fundamental thinker of the free market system, was a professor of ethics and moral philosophy. This is why the Bishops were on good ground on two fundamental points. In their first point they reminded us of the importance, the value and dignity of human work. They said that people contribute to their community and give meaning to their existence as human beings through work. This is why unemployment for most people is a loss of human dignity and of a sense of self-worth. This is why the Bishops reminded us that unemployment deprived people of work and of an income with which they could carry out their responsibilities to themselves, their families and their communities. Not to have that work is, as the Bishops said, a social evil. That is why, thanks to the Bishops, we have all been reminded that unemployment in this country is a personal tragedy, a national shame. If there is any one single body which has had responsibility for the past 15 years, it is those who have failed to establish a consensus by which Canadians can come together as individuals and as groups of individuals to begin the restructuring of this society so that we can get out of this recession.

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The second thing the Bishops said, which is important to me and to everyone, was that we need to remind the Government to worry about the growing tendency to treat individuals as