

LABOUR CONDITIONS

STATISTICS CANADA FIGURES—INCLUSION OF “DISCOURAGED WORKERS” CATEGORY

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the same minister. Statistics Canada have indicated that the real level of unemployment is approximately 225,000 persons higher than the government acknowledges, principally because of the inclusion of the category of “discouraged workers”. This has a regional impact of profound proportions, because workers in Atlantic Canada and Quebec are more likely to be discouraged with the higher level of seasonal employment there.

Will the minister explain why he said just a moment ago that the current method of measuring unemployment by the labour force survey which excludes these workers is a more accurate indication of the level of unemployment in Canada? Can he explain why he made that assertion?

Hon. Bud Cullen (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, as was indicated, the interpretation, or the misinterpretation of these figures is being done also by the hon. Leader of the New Democratic Party. Statistics Canada indicated that the tests were very imperfect and that there was a subjective test made by an individual. Often it is a matter of the question, “Do you want work?” If one goes into a pool room where there are eight guys standing around who are not working, and asks if they want work, they say yes, they want work. Do they want work, or do they want jobs? Statistics Canada indicated that there is a weakness in this basic method of interpreting.

We have indicated the number of discouraged workers according to the labour force survey statistics. These figures have been made available on a monthly basis. We have had the hon. member misinform and “broad-bent” the statistics long enough. I think he is once again doing a disservice in this respect.

● (1427)

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, that is complete and utter rubbish. The minister knows that Statistics Canada has made a complete mockery of what he has been telling the people of Canada for the past year. Statistics Canada has just confirmed what I have been saying for a year and a half, that the real level of unemployment is much higher, and now the minister is trying to say Statistics Canada is backing down on its own report. That is absurd.

Considering that Statistics Canada, in the long report I have here—I hope the minister has read it—points out that the figures are, in fact, higher because of seasonal employment patterns in Atlantic Canada and in Quebec, will the minister not agree that Statistics Canada is right, acknowledge he has been wrong, and do something to remedy the situation?

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, just because the hon. member says that something is rubbish, and then proceeds to lambaste or bombast his question, does not make it so. The fact of the

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matter, for the hon. member’s attention, is that the provisos expressed by Statistics Canada on the difficulties of obtaining unambiguous and meaningful estimates of the number of people who want work, but are not actively seeking employment, are likely to be ignored. That is exactly what the hon. Leader of the NDP is doing; he is ignoring the provisos that StatsCan itself put in.

I am not knocking StatsCanada. I think they are being very honest in what they are putting across here, a little more honest in their approach than the Leader of the New Democratic Party in interpreting that an additional 250,000 people are unemployed. That is not, in fact, what StatsCanada is saying.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, considering that StatsCanada, which is responsible, unlike the minister, has indeed pointed out that there are certain problems with the methodology but has underlined the fact that unemployment is much higher than the regular labour force survey indicates, and considering that countries such as Great Britain, Sweden and a number of others in western Europe include the “discouraged workers” category in their official statistics, and considering that government grants in Canada for job creation measures are largely based on real levels, or ought to be, rather than based on labour force surveys of unemployment, which means that the poorer regions are getting less than they should, will the minister change the methodology to include the “discouraged workers” category so that particularly those parts of Canada which need more assistance, to which they are legitimately entitled, will get more?

Mr. Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member always remembers things that are included in the statistics of Sweden and Great Britain, and tends to ignore some of the things which are not included in England in their statistics on unemployment, statistics which are remarkably different from those used in Canada. On that basis, he is comparing apples to oranges when he suggests that “this” should be included and “that” should not. The hon. member shakes his head, but once again he is misleading.

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[Translation]

FINANCE

ITEMS COVERED BY 5 PER CENT TAX

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance. He seems to be quite relaxed and I think he will give me an answer. At page 12 of his speech of November 16, we see that the 5 per cent tax on storm doors and windows has been abolished. Could he tell us what he means by storm doors and windows? I am asking that—and I am sure the minister will understand—because I have here a special bulletin which was sent by a manufacturer of doors and windows to his customers in which he tells them that he will have to charge 5 per cent more, effective November 17, to