

*Alleged Failure of Employment Policies*

throughout Canada will not be able to achieve their goal which is to pay much of their tuition.

• (2:30 p.m.)

The only ones responsible for that are those who sit at the present time on the treasury benches. And just to emphasize their responsibility, I just have to go through the 1965 Index of the debates of the House to see that those who were then in the opposition blamed unemployment on the ministers of that time, on the Progressive Conservative government.

I will simply mention four speakers from the Liberal party: the hon. Chevrier, Martin, Pearson and Pickersgill. You will notice at a glance that during the third session of the 23rd Parliament, the hon. Chevrier made 38 contributions about unemployment, blaming the government for not providing the necessary jobs for the Canadians who were able to work.

The hon. Paul Martin, whom I need not present, made 123 contributions here in the House to condemn the government headed by Right Hon. Mr. Diefenbaker for not taking the necessary steps to check unemployment.

I remember the Right Hon. Mr. Pearson, the Leader of the Opposition at that time, who on 34 occasions, took part in the debates of the House to upbraid the Progressive Conservative members for not providing the Canadian workers with jobs. He was supported by the hon. Pickersgill who took the floor on 34 occasions also to blame the government for the ills that plagued the Canadian workers because of lack of jobs.

I shall not mention the remarks made by other members. I was here at that time and unemployment was the curse of the day then. Today, we are witnessing a situation which is strangely similar to that which prevailed when the Liberals were on this side of the House. What answer do they suggest?

What is the Cabinet doing now to fight unemployment? Nothing at all. They leave to their own devices heads of families who lose their jobs because the government is failing in its duty.

Mr. Speaker, I should like to take a few minutes to deal more particularly with the sorry plight of our workers. I do not want to overdo it, but I shall simply relate the facts as they are.

At Saint-Hyacinthe, in my riding, conditions are so serious that people attending

[Mr. Ricard.]

church services last Sunday were urged to pray so that unemployment will end and that our leaders will be successful in their fight against it.

Furthermore, I want to put into the record a letter signed by the highest religious authority in the Saint-Hyacinthe diocese, his Excellency Bishop Sanschagrin and sent to the hon. Jean Marchand, Minister of Regional Economic Expansion. The letter reads as follows:

The priests of the Saint-Hyacinthe area deplore the stagnation which affects the workers of the area. As shown in the briefs submitted by the Confederation of National Trade Unions and the Goodyear retraining committee, 20 per cent of the labour force is unemployed and therefore up against a situation of poverty detrimental to the workers themselves, their families and their community.

We believe it is most urgent for us to make representations to your department so that measures are taken to remedy the situation. We join the two bodies mentioned above, as well as municipal authorities and intermediary bodies in asking that the economic subdivision of Saint-Hyacinthe be designed as a special area or in any other way, or that other effective steps be taken to cope with that serious problem which can only deteriorate if nothing is done.

And we have signed,

The signatures follow.

Up to 1954, the conditions in the city and area of Saint-Hyacinthe had always been rather satisfactory, and the area was known for its prosperity. But since 1964, things have gone from bad to worse.

I have tried as often as possible to draw the government's attention to that problem, but I must admit that it was apparently to no avail. Nobody heeded my warnings, and yet they were only made in the best interests of my fellow-citizens.

In 1964, there were 6,059 jobs in the Saint-Hyacinthe area. In March 1970, there were only 4,944. What happened to those people who lost their jobs? They joined the increasing number of unemployed; they often had to leave their own country. In some cases, they had to put up for sale the house they had built with the help of members of their family. To sum up, for many families, the worsening of unemployment in the Saint-Hyacinthe area as a result of the lack of planning on the part of our governments has spread panic and want everywhere.

I have here the report of a study prepared by University of Montreal students. It has been published in the Wednesday, March 18, 1970 issue of *Le Clairon*, and here is what it reveals: