

slogans that the present government is using to state that the unemployment situation is not that bad.

Mr. Speaker, everybody is for virtue. Any public-spirited man believes in economic planning and regional development policies but, unfortunately, as I already said, the cabinet members have found shelter behind these security-oriented and electorally profitable slogans, and nothing else seems to have been accomplished.

Since 1968, the present government has shown imagination only for these election slogans and these images. Unfortunately, Canadians have not yet learned to live by images and slogans alone. They realized, however, that they had elected a government which had to take its responsibilities in all fields, and in 1968, Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and his group stood before the people, he had answers for all problems confronting Canadians. This was summarized in one phrase: A just society for all Canadians. Unfortunately, this is proof that since it came to power, the government has let the unemployment rate climb carelessly and irresponsibly.

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): We are not in 1962!

Mr. Asselin: The Postmaster General brings up 1962. The Canadian people at that time passed judgment on the government. The Postmaster General is a man of great experience and he knows quite well that the Canadian electorate will judge the present government on its ability to devise solutions capable of solving the urgent and serious problems which the Canadian people now have to face.

Why does the Postmaster General interrupt me? He is actually an intelligent man and one for whom I have much consideration and respect.

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): Not too much!

Mr. Asselin: It is true and I do not hesitate to say so in this House. He knows it himself, but why does he not find a solution so that the employees of G. Lapalme Inc. may resume work? I know that the minister works very hard in this field.

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): Has the hon. member anything to suggest?

Mr. Asselin: The minister is asking me if I have a solution to offer.

We are always given the same answer when we ask the government to find solution to the problems that Canadians have to face today. And my reply to the minister is that Canadians have elected this government to take responsibilities and make decisions. It is not up to the opposition to lead the country. We did not receive the mandate, the government in power did.

Why always ask the opposition if it has solutions to the problems the government must face at this time? It is the same with the minister who interrupts me as with the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the other ministers. Whenever we mention a problem to them and ask them to find a solution, they reply: What are your solutions?

The Budget—Mr. Asselin

I want to inform the minister that it is not the official opposition which was elected to govern the country. Indeed, the Liberal government has been duly elected to make the decisions and it is up to the opposition benches to find the proper means often to reinforce the government's position and help it to solve the problems when it finds it difficult to do so.

It is quite in order for the minister to intervene, and I find there an opportunity to answer him. We all know that the uncompromising attitude of the government and its current arrogance make it quite reluctant to accept even the best solutions that could be presented by the official opposition for the benefit of the Canadian people. On the contrary, the ministry is afraid of the fact that we might get some political gain out of it should the government accept occasionally our suggestions with respect to the settlement of major problems.

This afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and I say this to my colleague the Postmaster General, I spoke of the pulp and paper industry and made some suggestions. I shall see in a few weeks if the government will have the courage to take the necessary steps to change this situation.

Mr. Speaker, the government, instead of spending the taxpayers' money on the spur of the moment, should try to save and strengthen an industry such as the pulp and paper industry which is so vital to the economy of many regions already considered as experiencing slow economic growth.

The Minister of Regional Economic Expansion has given a tremendous number of grants—

An hon. Member: He has worked hard!

Mr. Asselin: Indeed. He has given many grants to help industries on their way out.

• (2:30 p.m.)

I believe, for example, those grants were often handed out without any kind of planning or eventual performance study. If the Postmaster General would care to transmit a message to the cabinet, he could tell them the monies allocated to regional economic development—

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): You are asking me questions?

Mr. Asselin: Does the minister wish to make a statement, Mr. Speaker? In that case I shall sit down and listen to him. If the minister wishes to ask a question, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to answer him. Above all, if this is the case, I would like the minister to speak loud enough so his questions can go on the record and may receive proper answers. He should not be whispering under the clerk's table remarks he would not make in a loud voice. If the minister wishes to ask a question I am prepared to answer him.

Mr. Côté (Longueuil): It is you who are putting questions to me.

Mr. Asselin: I am not putting any questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. I agree with the hon. member for Charlevoix who should have the opportunity to finish his speech.