

Oral Questions

of the election of the Prime Minister as the Leader of our Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McDermid: I got the list for you, Pierre, of those who did not clap.

Mr. Lalonde: I would like to remind the Hon. Member that this has been a period during which the economy in Canada has grown at an average of 3.3 per cent a year. This is more than every other industrialized country except Japan. During this time the average for the other countries was about 3 per cent. That means that the rate of growth of Canada has been 10 per cent above the average of all other industrialized countries since 1968.

Since my friend has talked about unemployment I would like to remind him that during this period three million jobs have been created in this country. Today there are 40 per cent more Canadians employed than there were in 1968.

During this time we have had two million more women in the workforce than in 1968.

● (1420)

This country has created more jobs than practically every other industrialized country during that period, and we have succeeded in doing this while preserving our social security system, which the Tories would be the first to attack, like they did when they came into office in 1979.

If my friend wants to talk about unemployment and leadership, he should first ask questions of his Leader who has destroyed the economy of the North Shore, turned Schefferville into a ghost town, and closed down half of the North Shore of Quebec.

SIZE OF LABOUR FORCE

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister a question about a statement made by the Minister of Employment and Immigration, who has stated that unemployment figures are a bad guide to the state of the economy. There are 1,541,000 Canadians who are not applauding the elevation of the Prime Minister to office 16 years ago. They are out of work, and they do not care for your precious recital of false statistics that we just heard.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Crosbie: When the donkeys stop braying, I will ask my question.

Last Friday the Minister of Employment and Immigration said: "The economic recovery is drawing more people into the labour force causing an increase in the number of people looking for work and inflating the unemployment rate". He is blaming people coming into the labour force for inflating the unemployment rate. As a matter of fact his statement is completely false, because the labour force declined last month by 27,000 people.

How does the Minister account for this amazing misinformation by the Minister of Employment and Immigration? Is it deliberate? Is he deliberately trying to fool the Canadian people, or is he witless and stupid? Which is it? When will he be removed from his post if he does not even know that the labour force declined, not increased, last month?

Hon. Marc Lalonde (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that my friend has such a corner on stupidity that there is not much left for anybody else. He knows that the labour force in Canada has increased quite significantly over the last few years, particularly last year. There is practically no other industrialized country that has known a greater growth in labour force than Canada. He knows that, or should know that.

I have already told him that the labour force in Canada last year increased by some 40 per cent more than the United States. Indeed, I was wrong, because the latest final figures that have come out show that the labour force in Canada increased by some 58 per cent more than the United States in 1983.

It may be true that, indeed, there was a decline in the labour force last month of 0.2 per cent, but my friend should try to take a little broader perspective and examine the figures for several months to realize what is really happening in this country.

Mr. McKnight: Fifty-four per cent of the people already realize that.

Mr. Lalonde: If he took a little more trouble to examine the facts he would be able to discover for himself that, indeed, we have created over 400,000 jobs last year since the depression—since the recession—in 1982.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Lalonde: Yes, we had a very deep recession. We have created over 424,000 jobs, and we have created as many jobs comparatively as any other industrialized country—as a matter of fact, more than most of these countries.

The Canadian record is good, and it is not by knocking Canada and knocking Canadians—

Mr. McDermid: We are not knocking Canada; we are knocking you.

Mr. Lalonde: —that we will inspire confidence in this country. I leave my friend to his pessimism.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. John C. Crosbie (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has a colleague, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, who said on Friday: "Unemployment figures are a bad guide to the state of the economy." We want to know if that is now the Government's position, that they are a bad guide to the state of the economy? He also said that the labour force went up, when in fact the labour force in the last