

Adjournment Debate

Secretary to the President of the Privy Council (Mr. Kilgour) has the floor.

Mr. David Kilgour (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Privy Council): Mr. Speaker, the time allotted to me is short so I will speak English to express myself more rapidly.

[*English*]

The parliamentary secretary to the minister in question is sick tonight. He left to go home to his bed and I am replying for him. The minister, also, is sick. I heard the cheap jibe from across the way that he was here this afternoon. Well, maybe he was here but he was sick.

Mr. Corbin: The government is sick.

Mr. Kilgour: Mr. Speaker, the minister promised to respond further with respect to the difficult situation in Edmundston, New Brunswick. I understand there have been no further demonstrations in Edmundston and I am informed the situation there is now stable. As was said, the situation in Edmundston is a difficult one and one of the reasons is legislation which was passed by the previous government. I refer specifically to the repeater provision in the Unemployment Insurance Act.

Members on this side of the House, when in opposition, fought against this provision, which was imposed by the previous government under Standing Order 75C. I am informed that the minister and deputy minister recognized the difficulty but that the cabinet decided no changes were to be made. In these circumstances it is sheer hypocrisy on the part of the hon. member for Madawaska-Victoria (Mr. Corbin) to pretend that this repeater provision was not enacted by the government of which he was a supporter.

Tomorrow, a federal-provincial meeting will take place at which changes will be discussed, and I trust agreement will be reached so that the repeater provision which is causing harm in Edmundston may be altered. In this, we hope to receive support from all provinces.

The hon. member, in his question, himself admitted, as can be seen if one looks at the record, that this question has gone on for over a year. In other words, he admits that the factors giving rise to the difficulties in Edmundston arose prior to the change of government. Of course, the lack of job opportunities is also causing problems, but we cannot resolve the problems of the past 11 years overnight. A review process has been initiated by the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Atkey) to look at the provisions of the legislation and to bring forward amendments.

With regard to the Canada Works program, 400 jobs have been approved for the constituency of Madawaska-Victoria. Attempts are being made to work with the provincial department of labour and use additional funds in that area. I see, Mr. Speaker, that my time is up.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

● (2220)

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT—CANADA WORKS PROGRAM—REQUEST FOR SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDS

Mr. André Maltais (Manicouagan): Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me the floor. I am very nearly embarrassed to speak before such a large assembly.

My question this evening is very important and concerns phase IV of the Canada Works program. The question that I want to ask this evening of the spokesman for the minister is this: will the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Atkey) really inject additional funds in the province of Quebec to counter the rising unemployment rate, which will certainly go up even more this winter?

I raised this question for the first time on November 13, and absolutely nothing has been done since then, even though these existing difficulties have been compounded by major ones in my riding in early fall.

An important development has occurred recently in my area, namely, the closing of ITT Rayonier, Quebec. Over 1,500 people have lost their jobs and we have not yet been able to find any answer to create direct short-term employment.

Mr. Speaker, is it normal that to this date there has been no new development in the case of ITT Rayonier, Quebec, concerning job creation through Canada Works since I advised the minister of the serious difficulty this specific case was causing to the people of my riding more than one month ago? When 1,500 people lose their jobs, it means that 6,000 people will be affected. This is therefore an extremely serious problem and even a real tragedy for the people of Port-Cartier.

I recall quite well that on November 13 I asked the right hon. Prime Minister (Mr. Clark) whether he had a solution to suggest in the specific case of Port-Cartier. He replied that he was himself looking for short-term answers to solve the problems caused by the closing of ITT Rayonier, Quebec. Phase IV of the Canada Works program provided opportunities for short-term solutions for these workers, but we have never received any reply, either in the negative or in the affirmative, from the Prime Minister.

I would therefore simply like to register that the people in our area have been discriminated against with regard to phase IV of the Canada Works program this fall. Amounts of approximately \$2.6 million were allocated because of unemployment levels exceeding 16 per cent. This unemployment rate prevailed in the middle and lower North Shore and most projects were supposed to be aimed at this area.

Because the ITT plant closed down in Port-Cartier, a number of projects evidently had to be directed to that city, although the minister should have attempted to find extra funds to cope with that special problem. This is becoming unfair, Mr. Speaker, taking away moneys provided for a