

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Guilbault): Less than 25 members having risen, the motion is considered adopted. There is now a ten-minute period for questions or comments. Debate.

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, having regard to the amendment made by my colleague for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), I thought I might spend my time on this matter today dealing with the question of the refundable employment tax credit. The essence of the amendment made by my friend is to enshrine in our job-creation program in the private and public sector the idea of the refundable employment tax credit. There are a number of features to that idea which need to be brought to the attention of the House.

As the Hon. Member for St. John's East pointed out, and it is worth underlining, it is important to understand that with the refundable tax credit we will have an opportunity, simply stated, to create more jobs for the amount of money expended. That is not simply our idea: it is the understanding of the Economic Council of Canada which is why, on two separate occasions in two different reports, they made it clear that we have to move away from direct job creation and toward a refundable tax credit idea. They recommended it irrespective of party politics or consideration of any politics. They recommended it as an efficient way in which we could create more jobs for less money expended.

● (1230)

There are some other advantages to the refundable employment tax credit, Mr. Speaker. It can allow us to target specific groups who are being hurt more than others as a consequence of the recession and economic change over time. As my hon. friend from St. John's East mentioned, we could aid the over one-half million unemployed young people and older workers who find themselves without an opportunity. I could also mention disabled people. The great flexibility of the refundable employment tax credit is that it allows us to deal with specific groups which are being hurt more than others. It also creates permanent jobs. Time and again we have heard ministers of employment, as well as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde), talk about the incredible amount of money being spent and the tremendous number of jobs going to be created as a consequence. They have acronyms for these job programs. People wonder why, after all the money being spent and all the promises for jobs, we have fewer and fewer jobs as more and more programs are put in place by the Government. In the long run people are not looking for short-term jobs. Anyone who has responsibility will take any job if he does not have one. However, people are looking for permanent jobs. That is a feature of the refundable employment tax credit.

Perhaps even more importantly, the refundable tax credit is related to on-the-job training. It can be related to specific sectors of our economy and allow us to combine the Refundable Tax Credit with specific job training. It also allows us to participate in private sector economic growth and development rather than one-shot, short-term, summer-winter jobs. It allows us to deal with the question of technological change as economic sectors develop.

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That is why our Party has always supported the refundable employment tax credit, Mr. Speaker. It allows us to create more jobs for less money. It allows us to target certain groups which are hurt more than others. It allows us to combine it with on-the-job training so that people can see permanent jobs in the future in a dynamic and expanding economy. It allows us to deal in specific sectors with the growth and development of those. That is very important at this time in the history of this country because we are living in a time when technological change, particularly in the communications field, is overwhelming us. Less and less people find the opportunity for training programs which will give them real jobs. That is why the motion put forward by my friend, the Hon. Member for St. John's East (Mr. McGrath), as an amendment to the main motion should commend itself to all Members of the House, irrespective of party. It is an idea that is espoused by the Economic Council of Canada and by anyone who has any objective understanding of what is before us in making sure that we bring some growth back to the Canadian economy and expand it to create jobs in the country.

There is another reason we support the refundable employment tax credit as the best method of job creation. Any objective observer would look at the track record of job-creation programs put out by successive Ministers of Employment in the Government for the past three and one half years and see that they have been terribly mismanaged. As the Government constantly extols the programs and talks about the amount of money it is putting into the employment creation fund, at the end of it we have fewer jobs now than we did last year and an unemployment rate of 11.2 per cent. All of those programs, words, and self-puffery which have come from Ministers of the Crown for the past three and one half years have given us a record of job creation in both the public and private sector which is one of the lowest in the western world.

Outside of the other matters contained in the motion, I hope that this amendment by the Member for St. John's East will be agreed to by Members of the House. Mr. Speaker, a refundable employment tax credit is an idea that should be supported by all Parties. You are going to find it in place very soon because the logic and importance of it to so many people who are unemployed is undeniable.

Outside of the virtues of the refundable employment tax credit, it allows us to get around the problem which we have had for the past three years with the Government. The Government has mismanaged job-creation funding in terms of the increasing unemployment rate and loss of jobs. It has also converted job-creation funds to its own political purposes. For the past three years we have had questions raised by my friend, the Hon. Member for St. John's East, and myself when I was the employment critic for our Party. In November of 1982 I asked for the criteria for the program which was being used for Liberal patronage at that time. Fifteen months ago, in November, 1982 I asked the Government by written question in the House to table the criteria and details of the slush fund of that time. Fifteen months later the public has yet to receive