

Government Monetary Policy

like to ask him a question. The hon. member has been making, again, the most sweeping assertions, without any qualification, as to the attitude taken by employers toward employees. I have had a little experience myself—not very wide, but some—and I want to tell the hon. member that I am aware of cases where the situation he is suggesting is simply not so. Is the hon. member not speaking of a few cases where conditions may be as he has described? I suggest to him that to stand up and make assertions of such a sweeping character is not fair and, perhaps, even improper.

Mr. Argue: That is hardly a question, especially coming from someone so experienced as the hon. gentleman.

Mr. Macdonnell: I appreciate that the hon. member has been very kind in allowing me to intervene.

Mr. Howard: I do not object at all; I am sure I shall not lose my place on the floor. As far as I am concerned the statements I have been making are not unfair. They are statements of fact in the light of my experience in this field. If the Minister of Labour expects labour and management to sit down and find a solution to this unemployment problem, then the minister is talking through his hat and he is not going to get any results. It may well be that in some cases an industry or corporation will open its books completely and take suggestions about ways in which productivity might be increased. This might be done in an isolated case, but it would not affect the economy of this nation to any extent. So I say the Minister of Labour is merely abdicating his responsibility in this field.

This is a problem of primary concern because individuals are involved. There were some 693,000 of them involved as of January 14, and there are undoubtedly another 100,000 in addition to that, by now. We in parliament are expected to take steps to alleviate unemployment and lessen the burden on people in the bread lines, the unemployed, those who are on welfare and have no income, who are living hand to mouth almost begging for a bite to eat and something to go on.

It is a sorry shame that political parties will promise anything with respect to employment opportunities in order to get elected. There has been no better example than the Prime Minister with his promises of solving all our problems and providing full employment. This is an unfortunate occurrence. I could use stronger language but I do not want to be unparliamentary. Instead of shrugging off their responsibilities as they did last year and devoting their time to attempting to protect

the Prime Minister for his past errors, I urge hon. gentlemen opposite to consider that it is not too late to give the question of unemployment full study, perhaps as is being done at the moment by a committee of the other place.

We cannot sit idly by when there are 693,000 unemployed together with their families and heaven knows how many others. The children of the unemployed, sorrowfully, are the innocent victims of this crisis. We cannot ignore this problem and say that if we wait a little while business activities will pick up, conditions will change and employment opportunities will open. This is the most unkind thing we could do to the unemployed.

The unemployed have a responsibility, too. They should protest their plight in every way open to them. They should march on the federal and provincial governments, carry placards, lambaste the government and take every step open to them to make known their plight and convince the government that action should be taken.

Perhaps I should stop there and move my subamendment. I move, seconded by the hon. member for Timmins (Mr. Martin):

That the amendment be amended by adding thereto the following words:

"and this house further regrets that the lack of constructive government planning in monetary and debt management policies has resulted in the deepening of the unemployment crisis".

Hon. Donald M. Fleming (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I should like to begin my remarks this afternoon by quoting with full approval the opening remarks made by the hon. member for Kootenay West (Mr. Herridge) yesterday, as recorded at page 2207 of *Hansard*. The hon. member was commenting upon the subject matter chosen by the Leader of the Opposition for his amendment to my motion to resolve the house into committee of supply. Drawing attention to the fact that everyone had been led to expect that the official opposition wished to discuss unemployment conditions in Canada, the hon. member said:

Without any question, that is an emergency. Repeatedly during recent days we have heard demands from the official opposition that the government have a day's debate on unemployment. We in this group have sat here with bated breath waiting for the cannon's roar on unemployment. We have been disappointed. We have just finished listening to the pop gun in respect to one segment of the problem that faces us at this time. We were surprised; we were amazed; we were disappointed.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Fleming (Eglinton): Those are very apt words on the part of any hon. member in this house who was present yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.