

The Canadian Economy

Mr. Alexander: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, the newspaper headlines are important. This is what the people of Canada have been reading this evening, and hearing over television. The *Ottawa Journal* of October 14, the day of disaster, has a headline "Jobless Trend Most alarming in Ten Years." The *Toronto Star* reads "Unemployment Rate is Highest in Ten years." The *Ottawa Citizen* has "Jobless Highest in Decade." Those are the things with which I am concerned.

I listened to the Minister of Labour indicate his compassion and humanity, and I cannot quarrel with that. However, when he tried to explain away the feeling towards the Prime Minister, I felt it was pretty hard for anyone to have any confidence in a man who would, without any hesitation or reservation, say he was prepared to see this country have a 6 per cent level of unemployment as a result of the fight against inflation. I say this with the greatest amount of respect. If he was going to say anything, he should not have said that because it is hard to reconcile his compassion for humanity with the statement "I am prepared to see this country reach 6 per cent unemployment in my fight against inflation." How can you say that a person like that has compassion, has feeling? Why didn't he say, "What my government will attempt to do is reach full employment, whatever that may be"? That would have been a more acceptable statement.

Even though the Prime Minister was prepared to let unemployment rise to 6 per cent, we now have a seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 7.1 per cent. After continuous prodding by the opposition which gave you some indication of the direction in which you should go in terms of programs, you sat on your haunches—the Minister of Finance in particular. I not only call you breakers of the law but you are also thieves, and I say that with a great deal of respect.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member should not be carried away like this. I suggest to him that he should not forget that all speeches in the House require that they be addressed to the Chair. I suggest that this is fundamental and hon. members should never forget it. I invite the hon. member to make his speech to the Chair. If he wants to call me names, well, I will be glad to listen to him.

Mr. Alexander: I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for putting me on the right track. Through you, Mr. Speaker, all I can say is that after listening to the announcement of the type of programs that have been brought in—

Mr. Cafik: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I apologize to the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander), but I believe the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik) is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Cafik: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I am too sensitive, and I know the hon. member was carried away, but really I do not think it is parliamentary for the hon. member to refer, even to a collective body, as a group of thieves. I hope you might ask him to withdraw and correct that statement.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Hamilton West.

[Mr. Speaker.]

Mr. Alexander: Mr. Speaker, my remark has been made. I do not intend to withdraw it unless directed to do so by the Chair. And I will tell you why I used that phrase. When the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) was calling for tax cuts, was calling for corporate tax cuts, was calling for personal income tax cuts, the government said, "It cannot work; we cannot do that sort of thing."

Mr. Cafik: How does that make us thieves?

Mr. Alexander: Because we have been telling you month after month that you have to cut taxes, you have to bring about confidence in the economy. And now, all of a sudden, when the panic button is hit, here we have tax cuts.

• (midnight)

Mr. Speaker, I listened with some amusement to the great dissertation of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) in which he said he envisaged the problems in his June budget. What a ridiculous statement that was. I heard the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey) and others complain that we on the backbenches read our speeches. I am not reading anything now because I am deft enough to know what the problems are, but I would suggest that the minister's speech-writer should be fired forthwith. Any time he makes a speech it contains statements like, "I am now aware of a growing feeling about the problems of the economy".

An hon. Member: Why not fire the minister, never mind the speech-writer?

Mr. Alexander: I have heard it said that he should resign.

Mr. Woolliams: Big Ben does it again.

Mr. Alexander: The group around him have been giving him bad advice. Our human resource, Mr. Speaker, is the greatest asset we have, the greatest asset any country can have particularly in respect of democracy and freedom. We can only maintain this asset with a climate wherein the people can obtain some help, wherein they in turn can be taxed in order that we can afford to pay for some of the programs the government is bringing in.

The Minister of Labour has indicated that the vast majority of people on welfare do not want to be, and I readily admit that. But if this government continues its ad hoc approach and complacent attitude we cannot help having more people on welfare. The cities are growing. I understand that the welfare budget of the city of Ottawa is \$18 million, much more than was expected. I have not heard anything about the Canada Assistance Program. I hope that it will alleviate the problem. It seems to me that if the city of Toronto is in a predicament and cities all across the country are in the same position, we will have a very bleak Christmas.

I hope members on the other side of the House will not criticize me for reading about 18 lines. The Minister of Labour was careful to point out that there were only three opposition members in the House when he was speaking. I had hoped he would put on record the fact that the member for Hamilton West was at his desk doing his duty.