

Supply

Mr. Evans: We have done very well in adapting to market realities, and we will continue to do so.

Let us look at Canada in the world context. We are having difficulties. No one denies we are having economic difficulties, but the difficulties we have in Canada in most cases are not as severe as they are in most other nations in the world. That is the fact of the matter. We should not debate our problems in this chamber as if we were isolated in our own shell when in fact 30 per cent of our gross national product is traded with other nations.

I was in Vancouver last month talking to the Council of Forest Industries, senior executives of all the major forest product companies in the west, and the Council of Mining Industries, senior mining executives in the west. I asked them what the government could do in fiscal and monetary policy to make their lives better and what the government could do to obviate lay-offs and shutdowns.

Mr. Parker: Ask the workers.

Mr. Evans: Do hon. members know what their answer was? "Not a thing". There is no action the Canadian government could take right now to prevent lay-offs and shutdowns because the markets we sell into outside this country have closed down. If we cannot sell our forest products in the United States, there will be lay-offs and shutdowns, and there is nothing the Canadian government can do to prevent that.

Mr. Parker: Build some housing in Canada.

Mr. Evans: If we cannot sell our zinc, our copper, our lead or our aluminum into the United States and other markets, there is nothing the Canadian government can do; there will be lay-offs. If we sell 80 per cent of our automobiles into the U.S. market and the Americans are not buying cars, there is nothing the Canadian government can do to prevent lay-offs.

Mr. Keeper: Lay yourself off.

Mr. de Jong: If you can't do anything, resign.

Mr. Evans: These obvious point-blank and blunt facts of life have to be recognized by members of the House, and certainly by members who sit in the corner opposite.

There are some very serious and difficult questions facing this country and other countries, but I suggest in a non-partisan spirit that the main issues facing us are not economic in a monetary and fiscal policy sense. The real underlying and fundamental problems in this country are not interest rates, unemployment or inflation. Contrary to what hon. members opposite believe, I, along with people in the economics profession, business people and political people, know the mechanics of how to come to grips with our problems. Those mechanical solutions would work. We could eradicate inflation overnight and bring interest rates down overnight, but the nub of the issue is distribution costs. The costs, in terms of human lives, associated with getting inflation down fast and with getting interest rates down fast are extraordinarily high, and the gut-wrenching issue with which politicians here and in the legislatures across the country have to come to grips is how to make

those distributive decisions. How will we come to grips with the issue of how to distribute the costs of the transition from an economy that is sick to an economy that is healthy and growing fast? There will have to be redistributive decisions. How can we come to grips with the problems we all know we face? We know we have unemployment and labour shortages at the same time.

Mr. Keeper: Elect the NDP.

Mr. Evans: How can we come to grips with the issue of high unemployment in the maritimes and labour shortages in the west without asking people to uproot their lives and move across the country?

Mr. Keeper: Elect the NDP.

Mr. Evans: How can we come to grips with the problems of a person who has worked for 30 years and has certain skills but the industry in which he is working is dying? How should we help that person move from a dying industry into a new trade or a new skill?

Mr. Keeper: Elect the NDP.

Mr. Evans: Those are the gut-wrenching issues with which we have failed to come to grips in the debates we have had on this subject. We have not talked about those issues, and until we do we will not be able to solve our problems. We have to have some way to come to grips with how we are to help people adjust to the future.

Mr. Keeper: Elect the NDP.

Mr. Evans: How are we to put an equitable tax system in place which ensures that all Canadians bear their fair share of the costs of government and the costs of assisting industries to move from where they are now to where they certainly will have to be five or ten years from now? Those are the issues. We can sit here and argue about inflation and interest rates, but we have to come to grips with those distributive issues, and we have to find out how we can help people.

The individual person is the person about whom we are all concerned, and nobody in the House has a corner on compassion. We are all here because we want to do something for our constituents. We want to do something for Canadians. We want to give something of ourselves to make life a little better in this country. If we did not want that, we would not be here. No one has a corner on compassion. The issues with which we must come to grips are the distributive issues. In a debate like this we should be talking about those issues. What is the best way to help people? My friend spoke earlier about Victoriaville. My wife's family is from Victoriaville, Quebec. The amount of unemployment there is enormous. The rate is 60 per cent or 70 per cent. Victoriaville is a town with a textile industry which is going under. It is a town with a furniture industry which has faced great difficulties. I hope hon. members will comment on this issue. I am sure the hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Wright) will.