

The Canadian Economy

predicted that within the last year or so things would be getting better, when in fact they have been getting consistently worse.

On November 12, 1970, the Minister of Finance said: Recently I suggested publicly that on a seasonal basis... unemployment had about reached its peak and expressed confidence that we could look forward to continued improvement.

What was the rate of unemployment then, Mr. Speaker? It was 6.5 per cent. On March 18 of this year the Prime Minister said:

The government has taken a series of steps intended to alter the course of the economic policy... Some time must elapse before these steps can be fully efficient.

He went on to say:

I think that all the economic indicators show that the economy is moving.

What was the rate of unemployment then, Mr. Speaker? It was 6.2 per cent. The economy was moving, but in the wrong way. Just a few weeks ago, on September 7, the Minister of Finance said:

Unemployment will continue to decline.

He challenged the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) to resign his leadership if the prediction of that hon. gentleman that unemployment would not go below 6 per cent this year did not materialize. What is the unemployment rate now, Mr. Speaker? It is 7.1 per cent. Here is a real gem from the parliamentary secretary, who said on April 27 of this year:

The government is not prepared to accept an unemployment rate of 5½ per cent to 6 per cent seasonally adjusted or otherwise, for the future.

• (10:50 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, we have not had less than 6 per cent unemployment, seasonally adjusted, for the last 16 months but the parliamentary secretary seems quite willing to accept an unemployment rate of 7.1 per cent. We have heard a great deal from the ministers and the Prime Minister—the Prime Minister who believes in a just society, who believes in participatory democracy, who gives strong leadership to this country compared with the former Liberal Prime Minister who was weak, vacillating and uncertain about what to do.

Mr. Speaker, here are some interesting comparisons. For the month of September, in the four years during which the former Liberal Prime Minister led this country, from 1964 to 1967, the rate of unemployment, seasonally adjusted, varied from a low of 3.6 per cent to a high of 4.5 per cent. In the four years this great Prime Minister has led the country the unemployment rate, seasonally adjusted, for the month of September has varied from a low of 4.7 per cent—the lowest rate under this Prime Minister is higher than the highest rate under the former Prime Minister—to the highest rate yet for the month of September, of 7.1 per cent.

Given the consistently wrong, fraudulent and deceptive predictions of the Minister of Finance and of the Prime Minister, is it any wonder that we are involved in an emergency debate tonight? Is it any wonder that the Minister of Finance comes here tonight and spends the first ten minutes of his speech repeating all the nonsensical arguments he has been making for the last couple of

[Mr. Orlikow.]

years, that things are getting better and better? The number of people employed, the number of houses being built—everything is getting better except one thing: the patient is dying. We have more unemployment than we have ever had in this country.

These are the simple and concrete facts which cannot be ignored, Mr. Speaker. This government has consistently misjudged what is happening. In any other country where a minister has been so consistently wrong and where the Deputy Minister of Finance has repeatedly in meetings with economists from other government departments and officials from provincial governments berated and lectured them about how wrong they are, they would have been asked to resign. If they had any decency, they would not have waited to be asked. This is the record of this government—consistently ignoring unemployment.

Mr. Perrault: And you need a new record.

Mr. Orlikow: The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Perrault) is good at interjecting. But I do not mind, Mr. Speaker, because we have heard him before.

Mr. Perrault: You have been making the same speech around here for ten years.

Mr. Orlikow: The parliamentary secretary says that I have been making the same speech for ten years. The only reason I have done so is because this government is consistently wrong in regard to what has to be done. Mr. Speaker, in most governments one expects that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, who represents business and takes the point of view of businessmen, does not worry about the employee; but one expects the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour to have some heart. I do not expect him to have any brains, but I do expect him to have some heart, some compassion, some understanding about what ordinary people want.

Mr. Perrault: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. If the parliamentary secretary were in his place I would recognize him. The hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow).

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, I am more than willing to answer a question by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour if he wants to ask it in a proper way, because I know that every time he opens his mouth he puts, not just one foot but both feet into it, or changes his feet. When I have finished, if the parliamentary secretary wishes to rise and defend the government, I shall be glad to hear him.

In September we had the highest rate of unemployment this country has had in the last ten years—a rate of unemployment, Mr. Speaker, higher than that of the worst years under the previous Conservative government about which the Minister of Finance spoke so scathingly. I am willing to listen to him, Mr. Speaker; I am willing to have him defend his government and the 7.1 per cent unemployment.