

together with all Canadians in difficult times is reaping its own success.

What the Leader of the Opposition dismisses as gimmicks are in fact part of a major commitment being undertaken in all parts of Canada. I would point out that even many of his friends, those provincial premiers who he likes to have bask in his friendship, are also responding to the offers we made two weeks ago respecting job-sharing agreements. His own Conservative allies in the province of Ontario have signed an agreement with us to put several thousand workers back to work in the northern Ontario forests.

The Premier of British Columbia expressed interest in a similar offer last night and said he was prepared to sign the same agreement to put people back to work in British Columbia. We have had similar discussions in Quebec, Manitoba and other provinces. We can use the various benefits which we have introduced to put workers back to work, keep the skilled workers together and maintain the solidarity of those communities.

It is evident that there is no absence of policies. There are direct and creative initiatives to help Canadians find employment again. We would all be a lot better off, Mr. Speaker, if members opposite would stop trying to create false alarms and a sense of foreboding in our country—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Axworthy:—which is what they are doing, and instead go to work in their own constituencies. I ask, how many of those members have spoken to employers in their ridings about work-sharing projects? I suggest they should go back to their constituencies and help people get back to work, rather than coming here to raise false alarms.

Mr. Lambert: Come to speak to employers in my riding.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I would welcome an invitation to go to the hon. member's riding. I will be there as soon as he rents a hall.

The fact is that what we are facing today is not Canada's problem alone. The Leader of the Opposition is trying to maintain that the Liberal government alone is responsible. If that is the case, we are also responsible for creating more work than any other country over the last 15 years.

An hon. Member: The jobs only last two weeks.

Mr. Axworthy: Can we take credit for creating jobs at an average of 4 per cent per year starting from the 1960s up to the 1980s? If we are being blamed for the fall-off, we should be given credit for the 18 solid years of continual job enhancement at a rate of 2 per cent to 3 per cent a year. That is the best record of any industrialized country in the world.

An hon. Member: How long do they last?

Mr. Axworthy: We also have the fastest growing labour force at the same time, Mr. Speaker.

Supply

It would be much more honest for the members opposite simply to deal with this debate on the facts. The fact is that every country is facing this kind of downturn.

An hon. Member: That is not true!

Mr. Axworthy: It is not true? Look at the United States with its 8.5 per cent unemployment rate. Look at France with close to 9 per cent, and Great Britain. The Tories are following the policies advocated by the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre, those wonderful Thatcherite Reaganomics, which are resulting in over 12 per cent unemployment in that country.

We admit that we have a problem in Canada. However, we also say that we are proposing answers to those problems. There are answers contained in the budget to decrease inflation. Are we hearing from members of the opposition that they do not want the inflation rate down, that they want to continue a high inflation rate and thereby continue a high interest rates policy? If that is the case, then they are the party of high interest rates.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock p.m.

At one o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

[*Translation*]

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): When the House rose at one o'clock, the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) had the floor.

• (1410)

[*English*]

Mr. Axworthy: Before the luncheon adjournment, Mr. Speaker, we had established that the subject of debate today is of such importance to the country that it should not be the object of charades, playacting or back room manoeuvring and all the other ploys that are being used by the opposition for political advantage. The Canadian people expect more from us than that, Mr. Speaker. They expect and they deserve serious debate about the conditions facing the country and the ways in which we can alleviate the problems of unemployment and, at the same time, stimulate growth in the economy.

I think it is worth talking about the structure of unemployment in Canada, Mr. Speaker. The nature of the problem is often wildly dramatized. Unemployment has some very important characteristics and it is not an experience that is the same for all people. Like most other nations, for a long time we have faced the serious and chronic problem of high unemployment in certain regions of the country and among certain groups of people. Those people are commonly called the structurally unemployed. This means that people in areas of low employ-