

Alleged Failure to Reduce Unemployment

Mr. Gilbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I shall take only about two minutes to conclude. The government's attitude to public housing is disappointing, to say the least. It is directly contrary to the trends that prevail in Great Britain and other European countries, and directly contrary to the policies enunciated by the United States.

The task force described public housing developments as ghettos. I say that was a wrong conclusion for it to reach. I have here a statement issued by the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities which says:

—the Federation wishes to make clear that:

—sweeping generalizations to the effect that public housing is a ghetto (in Canada) and that the majority of public housing residents are unhappy and dissatisfied with this form of housing assistance are without foundation;

—to deplore the high cost (per unit) of public housing projects and to conclude from this that less costly public housing only should be approved and financed by the public purse (through elimination of "trimmings", by providing fewer complementary amenities, etc.) is to move in the reverse direction to that which should and must be followed if public housing is to continue to exist in our arsenal of housing policies;

The task force's recommendation that urban renewal projects not be continued until an increase in the housing stock is available is also discouraging. It gives the impression that any urban renewal scheme involves the bulldozer approach, that a bulldozer goes in and knocks down all the homes in the area. This is not so. In fact, in my riding only part of an urban renewal area was treated in this way and loans were made available to the remaining home owners so they could improve their homes. To give the false impression that the bulldozer approach has always been applied and has produced bad results is again disgusting and disappointing.

I have had only a short time to set forth some of my criticisms of the report made by the task force and some of the policies that we in the New Democratic party would put into effect. I have not covered them all and I hope that shortly I will be able to spell them out more fully.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Forestry and Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, all my life I have been interested in the unemployment problems, at first as a union man, then as Minister of Manpower and Immigration and now as minister designate of regional development.

[Mr. Deputy Speaker.]

I have studied unemployment problems affecting not only Canada, but other countries such as England, France, Holland, Germany and Italy. I have tried to find out how various governments attempted to deal with this plight afflicting our economic systems, especially our free economies and even those which are somewhat less free.

Like everyone else, I realized that, among the many types of government, whether they be socialist, liberal, conservative or even coalition, the only people offering an effective solution to the unemployment problem are those who are not in power, that is the opposition. This is true not only here in Canada, but in every other country. The opposition has adequate solutions. But naturally, once in office, they are faced with the same difficulties and, understandably, the solutions prove to be more difficult. In fact, I can very well understand the position of the opposition and I know what I would say if I were sitting across from here.

Ever since Confederation, the unemployment situation has been a continuous problem in Canada. The different governments have tried various methods to solve it. Attempts have been made to provide equal employment opportunities from Halifax to Vancouver and in Newfoundland, since it joined the Confederation. Mr. Speaker, the first step taken was to build railroads to join the eastern and western parts of the country in the hope of eliminating regional disparities and of creating new jobs. This was intended to achieve full employment.

• (4:20 p.m.)

We came to realize that this very generous and even brilliant idea of the Fathers of Confederation did not allow them to achieve the purposes they had intended. Then came the 1929 recession combined with unemployment which lasted from 1930 to 1940. In short it was only the war which made it possible to solve the chronic unemployment problem in Canada. An attempt was then made to discover new ways.

Following the report of the Rowell-Sirois commission, it was advanced that through a better distribution of the tax basis, and a larger share of the revenues to the provinces, we would no doubt restore that balance which was inexistent in our country and which was responsible for the development of certain areas and lack of it in others.

After a few years, we came to realize that even that formula was not satisfactory. It is