

Government Orders

[English]

Since there will be no business before the House between two and three o'clock p.m., the House may then wish to adjourn.

Questions and comments. Debate.

Hon. Warren Allmand (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce): Mr. Speaker, as was pointed out, today we are debating a motion to adjourn Parliament for four weeks. This is a sad commentary on the preparedness, the competency and the commitment of the government that it wishes to adjourn Parliament at a time when the country and the world are faced with so many serious problems.

This country is in a serious recession, with very high unemployment, the unity of the country is under attack in many of the provinces, instability in the Middle East and eastern Europe, and starvation in Africa, all of which affect world peace and security. We have many unresolved aboriginal issues, issues that came to the forefront last year in Kanasetake and Kahnawake and other places in the country and were to be dealt with. But, here we are, almost a year later, and not much has been done.

It appears that the government does not have any agenda, any program or any policy to deal with these issues and, therefore, it adjourns for four weeks.

To begin with, let us look at the economy. We have the worst recession since 1982. The recent unemployment figures indicate that 10.5 per cent of Canadians are unemployed. This amounts to approximately 1.4 million Canadians out of work. Retail sales have taken tremendous drops. Housing starts are way down and bankruptcies are way up.

One could argue that perhaps this recession, this situation that I have just referred to, is a result of the usual business cycle, but there are many, many experts who would argue that even with the business cycle things would not be as bad as they are if the government had not deliberately adopted certain policies which made the situation much worse.

We can, first of all, refer to the goods and services tax which, whether you agree with it or not, nearly everybody, nearly every expert unanimously said this was the wrong time to bring in a tax like that at a time when the

country was going into a recession. We have people out of work, people with their salaries frozen and they are faced with additional taxes. What do they do? Of course, they cut back on their retail buying and their investing. This only hurts the economy further and drives it into a still deeper recession.

Another matter that no doubt has affected the lay-offs and unemployment is the free trade agreement. It was contemplated by the government and by the Economic Council of Canada that the free trade agreement would very seriously hurt many of our industries and there were recommendations that adjustment programs be put in place to compensate for those adjustments that would take place. That has not been done, with the result that we have many industries, and I will refer to some of them very specifically in a few minutes, that have closed down and moved their operations to the United States. This has particularly hurt the industrial areas of this country: southern Ontario, Montreal and parts of the larger cities in the west.

When employment was increasing in 1984, 1985 and 1986, the Prime Minister claimed responsibility. I can recall very well when the unemployment figures came out in those days, he got up and boasted that the jobs being created were due to his policies and his programs. He said that he created those jobs. It was not the private sector, it was not the result of international markets, it was not the result of worker productivity, but it was the Prime Minister who was responsible, according to his statements of those days. If you look in *Hansard* you will see them.

The upward trend in creating jobs started in 1983 and not in 1984 or 1985. It accelerated in those years, but it started in 1983. Nevertheless, let me make this point. If the Prime Minister had the answers in 1984 and if he was really responsible for the creation of those jobs in 1984, 1985 and 1986, where are the answers now? If he had the answers then, if he had the policies, if he had the solutions that led to the creation of jobs, surely now is the time when he should put those solutions to work.

It is obvious that he did not have the solutions and that he was not responsible for that job creation from 1984 to 1987. He was simply riding the trend. He was simply riding the surge of the business cycle which, at the time, was an upward trend.