

an Indian band at The Pas to construct the water and sewer system and streets for a modern subdivision on the reserve. In a more traditional field, we are working out with the Alberta government the role of PFRA in rehabilitating the major irrigation works in southern Alberta.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, this was a brief summary of my department's various programs. I am not saying they are perfect. But for hon. members to state out of hand in the House that the government is doing nothing for the underprivileged or the unemployed, this is mere demagoguery. We are even accused of being unresponsive to the unemployment problem!

And yet, all of us, my department officials and myself as well as the cabinet that is behind me, are doing our utmost to find solutions to the Indian and Métis problems and those of the unemployed fishermen who are unable to find work and whose income is inadequate. We are trying to solve the farmers' problems with our ARDA programs. We are trying to find solutions to the problems of underdeveloped regions and declining industries, such as the footwear industry and the shipyards, by devoting the whole of our time to them.

The opposition members may say we are not good at it and that they would find the solution. Some will agree, some will not! But to have the Canadian people think that we are so many civil servants absolutely unresponsive to unemployment is to lie to them and try to make them believe such lies.

Mr. Speaker, there is one sure thing: the number 700,000 or 668,000 may be stated in the face of the Canadian people, but the opposition would really be wrong in not stressing that important fact in our social life. Indeed, the number is necessarily relative: 600,000 in relation to what?

Ten or 15 years ago, the labour force in Canada was about 5,000,000 or 4,500,000. Of course, 600,000 out of 4,500,000 has a somewhat greater importance than 600,000 out of 8,000,000. In the United States, there may be 1,000,000 unemployed, which is relatively less serious than in Canada because the labour force there is so much greater. Therefore when people use exclusively absolute terms and disregard seasonally adjusted rates, thereby ignoring the fact that the seasonally adjusted rate of unemployment fell from 6.6 to 6.2 per cent, I say they minimize the truth and want to hide it.

It is true that the unemployment rate has relatively decreased and it is important to mention it while complaining of the fact that in absolute terms, there are more unemployed than before. However, the fact that the seasonally adjusted rate of unemployment declined from 6.6 to 6.2 is extremely important and nobody could deny it. And if someone wants to use merely 130,000 more—

• (5:10 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Orlikow: The figure is 668,000.

23786—67

*The Budget—Mr. Fairweather*

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): We know that, but you never mentioned the other figure. I say it is a good thing that you mentioned there are 668,000 unemployed in Canada. It is part of your job to do so, but it is also part of your job to say that unemployment has declined when this figure is considered in relationship to the other figure.

[Translation]

The rate went down from 6.6 to 6.2 per cent. We are now faced with an extremely serious and complex problem related to the general policy of the government which is being accused of promoting unemployment. Some of our unemployment may have stemmed partly from the government's action. But nobody ever came up with a practical and the solution to prevent this phenomenon.

When I hear our so-called leftists claim that the only way to fight unemployment is to lower taxes, I must say that I do not know where they learned their leftist's political philosophies. Indeed, this seems to be a rightist's attitude. In fact, who would benefit from tax reduction if not the wealthiest regions and this at the expense of the disadvantaged areas of the country? Come on, this is crystal clear!

Some hon. Members: Hear! hear!

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): This must be the most reactionary position in Canada today. The only way to assist the disadvantaged people of Canada is to enforce the kind of selective measures we have taken.

Mr. Speaker, I am as much concerned about the unemployment rate as any member in this House and there is no doubt that any politician would find such a situation disastrous. It is not as bad as the opposition pretends it is, but it may well be more serious than we thought. It is undoubtedly a serious problem and I only wanted to indicate that the government is engaged in correcting the situation and that my department has taken very significant action which will bring results, even though it might not yet be obvious because of the general situation. But I am convinced that we are going in the right direction and that, with some degree of co-operation, we shall be able to bring back a reasonable level of employment in Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear! hear!

[English]

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Of all the people who should be talking and making accusations about vague denunciations, it occurred to me that the minister, because of what he has been saying in the last couple of months, is a master at it.

Mr. Marchand (Langelier): I have nothing to withdraw.

Mr. Fairweather: We will leave the record to speak for itself.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It speaks very loudly.

Mr. Fairweather: Even the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) had to do a little chopping down for vague denun-