

concern for this country exists on this side of the House. What on earth is going on across the way?

Why was it that we were prompted to take this special action under Standing Order 26? Put very simply, it was because the last nine months and 19 days have seen Canada enter into what could only be called a devastating and pathetic situation.

Let us look at some of the facts. We now have a prime interest rate of 18.25 per cent, and rising on a weekly basis. It is the highest ever in Canadian history. It is the highest rate ever, and we have been listening to the pathetic responses of the Minister of Finance for the last week that he intends to do nothing about it, it is out of his hands and there is nothing that can be done. That is the kind of commitment, initiative, and solution we get from the present government.

The consumer price index in Canada has now increased 11.2 per cent. In the food sector the increase is 13.7 per cent. Bankruptcies in small businesses across Canada today in some provinces are occurring at a 130 percentile rate over the same period last year. In the last year we have seen not tens of thousands of Canadians laid off but 200,000 Canadians laid off, primarily in central Canada. In relation to the United States dollar the value of the Canadian dollar is at its lowest ebb since 1933, since the depression years. We have a deficit now in excess of \$14 billion, a current accounts deficit of approximately \$6.2 billion.

We have a housing crisis in this country. In numbers like never before, young people are finding it impossible to qualify for mortgages. People are facing difficulty. Even people in this House are facing difficulty when they go to banks to renegotiate mortgages, only to find that their incomes are insufficient. They cannot qualify for the new rates which the government's policies have created. This is to say nothing of rental housing. People who are out now attempting to purchase homes find that there are no homes being constructed to meet the demand across Canada.

The rental housing situation is worse. In my own city of Kamloops, British Columbia, the vacancy rate is virtually zero. In other major metropolitan areas across the country serious rental accommodation shortages are forcing people to live in vans, converted crawl spaces, and converted garages. That is the kind of situation in which we are finding ourselves in Canada. Indeed, it is a housing crisis.

Of course, those who can least afford it are those who are being hit the hardest. I refer to the elderly on fixed incomes and on pensions, veterans on pensions, and the handicapped. I refer to people experiencing regional disparities across the country. Of course, the most dramatic picture of all where this problem focuses very clearly, in terms of the real problem in Canada, is seen when we look at the unemployment level in Canada. In Canada 1,320,000 people are without jobs. That is approximately 8 per cent of the total work force, and here in Canada we are asked to accept, presumably, that 8 per cent unemployment is acceptable, to say that more than one million Canadians being out of work is quite acceptable. That is the

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kind of response we are hearing from across the way when inquiries are raised in the question period as to what is going to be done. The infamous shrug comes from across the way. Presumably 8 per cent is acceptable.

I would like to remind hon. members opposite that the unemployed in Canada are not purchasing a great number of Canadian goods. The unemployed do not build and create a sound basis for our Canadian economy. They are unable to play a committed and meaningful role in our various communities and neighbourhoods. They cost Canadians money. They cost all of us in this House money, and I think most of us are getting fed up with having to pay for the unemployed of Canada, because there is no reason to have unemployed in Canada. Other western industrialized countries would never begin to accept an 8 per cent unemployment rate if they had the richness and the opportunities which exist in our country.

One serious side of the employment question which is often overlooked is the social impact of unemployment. What does it really mean when more than one million Canadians are unable to find work, and when more than one million Canadians are unable to provide for their families in a respectable way? One does not have to quote those Canadian and American analysts who have found correlations between rising unemployment and the increased incidence of suicide, homicide, mental illness, family breakdowns, prison sentences and so forth. One can simply examine the contents of a recent analysis with respect to the social impact of job lay-offs prepared by the Metropolitan Toronto Social Planning Council. In this report that council indicates the following:

Social interaction patterns can be very much disrupted by unemployment. The loss of social contact through the work setting is further aggravated by the tendency of unemployed persons to withdraw from friends, relatives and community life... Within the family, social interaction patterns can be upset since the loss of a job and income may diminish the unemployed person's status and authority. Shifts in roles within the family, coupled with changes in the unemployed worker's personality, can provoke considerable stress and in extreme cases can lead to family breakdown.

Turned inward, these feelings of bitterness, rage, and powerlessness may result in depression that becomes further exacerbated by the self-doubt and blame that develop when job hunting is not successful. Anxiety over financial difficulties, both now and in the future, also contributes to the depressed mental state that has been found to characterize many laid off workers.

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The impact of the economy on family life is further illustrated by the following comments from the National Council on Welfare:

Anything that widens the gap between income and need—the loss of breadwinners wages because of unemployment or illness, escalating rent, sudden rises in fuel and grocery costs, any unexpected and unavoidable expense—can plunge a poor family into crisis.

Specific evidence on personal and family crises due to unemployment is increasingly being catalogued in Canada. In Windsor, Ontario, a city which has experienced major lay-offs in the automotive sector, the mayor's committee on services for the unemployed reported that:

Inability to make credit payments, inability to make unemployment or welfare payments stretch to the end of each month, has brought about uncontrollable