

Anti-Inflation Policies

Mr. Alexander: Yes, and marijuana, but I do not want to get into that subject tonight. That is another area where there will be great confrontation. Instead, we have the dismal picture of rising taxes and curtailed services. We have all sorts of gimmicks to extort more tax revenue, but no sound program to develop larger or new sources of legitimate taxation. This nation is spending millions of dollars, collecting billions in revenue, and has an export trade which is the envy of the underdeveloped nations and not a few industrialized nations. We have a high standard of living, are possessed of space, our natural and human resources are uncounted, and we are mercifully detached from the problems created by unfriendly neighbours—that is, so far. Yet with all this, and with all our achievements, affluence and potential, we must admit to an inability gainfully to employ more than 6.7 per cent of those of our people able and willing to work. I say shame!

The Prime Minister is aware of this rate of 6.7 per cent and that it is gradually increasing as a result of the policies that he and his government have set. The nation has become alarmed at seeing these figures in print, yet the Prime Minister is prepared to let them go higher. What does all this mean in terms of rates? We talk of 6.7 per cent as being what we call the actual rate, if there is such a thing. There is 10.8 unemployment in the Atlantic provinces, though if the Atlantic provinces are broken down Newfoundland shows a rate of 15.3 per cent, New Brunswick 11.8 per cent, Prince Edward Island 9.7 per cent and Nova Scotia 7.7 per cent. Our slow-growth areas are in trouble most of the time and are seeking assistance. Yet they are subjected to the callous policies of this government.

With regard to Quebec, we are all waiting. I see the whip over there so I will not get into this subject tonight, but in Quebec there is 9.7 per cent unemployment. We know what Bourassa said about that. British Columbia has 7 per cent unemployment and Ontario has 4.6 per cent. It does not matter whether you call this rate of unemployment the seasonal rate, the actual rate or the adjusted rate. The fact is that 6.7 per cent of our employable labour force in Canada is unemployed, which in terms of people means 542,000. There is no argument about that figure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Alexander: I was just getting started, Mr. Speaker.

[Mr. Alexander.]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I am afraid his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Carry on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I must confirm whether there is unanimous consent to allow the hon. member to continue.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Alexander: May I thank my colleagues for accepting the preamble I have given them so far, and I am now about to come to the meat of my remarks. There is no point in talking about seasonally adjusted rates or actual rates when discussing the effect of the government's policies. Those people who are unemployed know that the situation is drastic, that it is critical, desperate. All they want is some leadership.

I was particularly interested in the meeting between the mayors of municipalities, the provincial governments and the Prime Minister. The *Globe and Mail* for April 21 last carried the headline, "Unemployment cripples cities". I do not think the government really cares about our cities, anyway. This newspaper also indicated that major urban construction was grinding to a halt, according to Mayor Sidney Buckwold of Saskatoon. There was a serious situation so far as employment opportunities in our cities was concerned.

• (9:10 p.m.)

The *Globe and Mail* of April 14 indicates that there are no funds in Ontario or any other province to combat unemployment on the scale that was created through the monetary and fiscal policy of Ottawa in trying to battle inflation. Ontario's urban centres such as Hamilton, Toronto, Windsor, London and Kingston are hard hit and will continue to be hard hit. Cornwall was also hard hit, yet I heard the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion (Mr. Marchand) say that if we think 20 per cent unemployment is high, he knows other areas with an even higher level.

The Prime Minister has stated that increased unemployment is a very regrettable side-effect of the government's fight against inflation. That is the understatement of the year, particularly when he finds it impossible to point out just what level is unacceptable. This is what the Canadian people want to know. As long as there are 542,000 unemployed, I hope the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) will understand that countless numbers of people are now hoping that the axe