

*Unemployment*

Why does he remain so silent? That is something the people of Canada want to know. I think if he and the president of the Liberal federation would spend a little more time listening to this debate, they would learn something about the problems faced by the unemployed people today. I also suggest to members of the cabinet that if they would spend less time in their oak-panelled offices and would go to the cities and towns where unemployment is a problem today, they would learn firsthand some of the problems being faced by Canadians who are undergoing very serious conditions at this time.

As has been outlined in the house earlier, in cities like Toronto, men are having to leave their families so that their families can get relief. That is a fine state of affairs. Yet the Prime Minister does not deign to stand up and outline a policy to meet the problem. As I said, when things are going well, the Prime Minister is only too glad to make speeches. He made one in Quebec city on September 18 last which I do not need to paraphrase because I have his exact words here. At page 25 of a copy of his speech issued by his office I find the following:

In a country such as ours, there should be work for everybody. If we cannot manage the national economy in such a way that there is work for everybody, then we are incompetent.

Today, Mr. Speaker, there are more than 600,000 unemployed Canadians who are living proof that the Prime Minister and the government are incompetent. When you have, not only a government that is incompetent, but also the admission by its leader in his own words, not mine, that it is incompetent, then there is only one honourable alternative for that government to adopt, and that is to resign.

It is obvious, and has been for a long time, that the only way a solution for the immediate problem of no jobs and no unemployment insurance benefits for thousands of Canadians today can be found is to call an immediate conference with the provinces to work out how relief costs can be shared and public works can be increased to provide jobs.

A later conference, the agenda of which will be settled on April 26, should deal with a long-range plan to create conditions within the country which will attract the establishment of additional secondary industry in Canada, to process far more of our primary products than we do today. This is the best potential means we have available to us of providing jobs on a permanent and productive basis.

In the meantime, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Harris) can do two things which will

materially increase jobs for all Canadians. First of all, when he brings his budget down next Tuesday night, he should reduce the high commodity taxes that are adding so much to the cost of the goods we have to sell today, and are making it increasingly difficult to sell these goods, both here and abroad. This reduction in commodity taxes would not necessarily mean a reduction in total tax revenue, as was made very evident in the case of the cigarette tax a couple of years ago. The greater number of products which will be sold, because their prices will be more acceptable to a great many more people, multiplied by the lower unit tax, will probably equal or even exceed the present total tax revenue.

The second thing which the Minister of Finance can do is to reduce today's high income taxes, which are making it increasingly difficult for Canadians to buy consumer goods. Once again, a reduction in the income tax does not necessarily mean a reduction in the total income tax revenue because, by making it possible for more people to buy more goods, it will make it possible to employ more people manufacturing these goods, and these people will be earning incomes on which they will be paying income tax instead of drawing on the government for unemployment insurance benefits, or for relief. In addition, the increased quantity of goods which we would sell by taking this measure would again increase the commodity tax total.

The Minister of Finance has within his power the possibility of greatly increasing the number of jobs available to Canadians. By taking the two steps which I have recommended, I do not believe he will reduce by one cent his total tax revenue.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in answer to questions which have been put to him in this house concerning unemployment, the Prime Minister has tried to make the people believe that the preliminary conference which this government has called for April 26 will deal with today's critical unemployment problem. The Prime Minister knows that nothing is further from the truth, because that conference to be held on April 26 is nothing more or less than a planning conference which will arrange the agenda for the later conference to deal with dominion-provincial problems. The conference to be held on April 26 will not deal with unemployment. The purpose of it is simply to discuss whether or not unemployment will be on the agenda of the later conference.

Now, the Prime Minister knows that quite well, but still he has pretended that the solution to the present critical unemployment