

*Labour*

It is actually 40 per cent, by the time 60 per cent is taken off, of the pension one expected to receive. That is hardly an adequate recompense for a life of good, hard, honest work put into this country.

It is obvious that POWA is not adequate to meet the challenge of providing older workers with the financial resources they require to prepare themselves for retirement, a justly deserved retirement, as I have just said.

My Party and I call on the Government to fund the program for older workers to the extent required that all those affected by this Government's mismanagement be assisted. For the future and from today on we demand that the Government put in place policies which we have long championed in this House and which produce jobs. I would suggest that jobs are a far better solution, a far better way to correct the problem which these older workers are suffering and which of course would obviate the need for a POWA program at all.

These policies are already ingrained very deeply in the societies of many of our more progressive competitors. I know what will be said by Members opposite and by the business community. They will say that we have to get lean and mean in order to be able to compete, in order to be profitable, and in order to be efficient. A good many of our major competitors are already doing what my Party and I are saying ought to be done.

When the Government talks about the need to become competitive and efficient in relation to our competitors, it is not really talking about the progressive competitors. It is talking about those places where we have low wages. It is talking about the places where, for all intents and purposes, we have societies where the workers are often captive of their own Government, unable to unionize and put into free trade zones such as they have in Mexico where wages are low. I would point out that in that context they are really slaves; certainly in this day and age that is all they are. I would also point out that when we become competitors with slaves, as I would suggest the Government thinks we ought to do, that is precisely what we become.

• (1620)

The New Democratic Party and myself suggest that we ought to put into place policies such as pension reform

enabling workers from this day forward to carry pensions with them after shorter vesting periods, regardless of who is their employer. Then when they reach perhaps 55, 60 or whatever, and happen to suffer unemployment they will not have to suffer the enormous penalties that people are suffering these days.

We have suggested for a long time that there needs to be a notice of lay-off. Notices of lay-off and notices of closure give people the opportunity to adjust before the occurrence. Statistics show that when people receive notice of lay-off, they are better able to acclimatize themselves to the eventualities of no longer being able to work.

We have been suggesting for a long time that compensation to the communities be put in place, paid for by the employers, not as the Government has suggested under its Community Futures Programs, paid for out of the pockets of the people who are becoming unemployed. We have been saying that lay-offs and closures have to be justified. A grant levy system has to be put in place to ensure that all employers contribute to the cost of retraining. Let me reiterate that the cost of training and retraining ought to be borne by the employer, not as the suggested changes to the unemployment insurance scheme would us move into, that is, the training being financed by the people who are suffering the worst in our society, those who are laid off.

Ironically the changes this Government has made in relation to pension and income severance pay have cost Canadian wage and salary earners much more than will be spent in one year under this POWA Program. I am referring to changes where people are penalized when they receive severance pay when they are laid off or when they take their pension at retirement and are no longer entitled to unemployment insurance.

I would conclude by referring to a notation which I saw in one of the Government's own publications as it relates to older workers. It says: "As a group older workers face the most serious problems coping with displacement. At the very least adjustment among older workers is extremely difficult, and more often than not, virtually impossible". As I said in the beginning, my Party and I support these amendments to the Act, but there are so