

Employment Support Bill

expressed some doubt about it being the ultimate solution to the very serious problems facing Canada. If I were in the position of the two cabinet ministers who entered the debate and was uncertain concerning actually what the problem was, and whether or not these measures would be effective, I am certain I would have attempted to make the same general non-committal speech.

I listened to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, the hon. member for York North (Mr. Danson). This man has been noted since his entry in this House for a sense of humour. It must have been very repugnant to him, coming from an industrial centre in Ontario—the very industrial centre of Ontario—to have had to deliver an entire speech which was an apology for the government program and which was an attempt to establish the ground work for blaming the action of another government for the economic morass in which we find ourselves today. I believe it was absolutely ridiculous for him to suggest that all was well in the economy of Canada in the industrial sector and in the labour sector before Mr. Nixon made his statement.

● (5:30 p.m.)

The fact that he spoke on behalf of the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) indicated something that every man on the street predicted, namely, that the government would endeavour to use this action as an apology or excuse for the trouble in which Canadians find themselves today. He was followed by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Perrault), and if we had any doubts previously, Mr. Speaker, they were dispelled then because he took the same theme.

It was interesting to note that both of these gentlemen, when castigating the actions of our neighbour and using them as an excuse for our problems, admonished the other members of this House not to approach the bill on the basis of casting the blame somewhere else, and urged the House to make progress. We always view these programs introduced by the government in such tremendous haste, programs which are not actions but reactions, with some suspicion because from bitter experience during the short span of this parliament we have learned that when the government makes mistakes it is not just a matter of a mistake but of a series of mistakes. And they are not just minor mistakes; they are major ones. Every major mistake the government makes adversely affects the nation's economy and the livelihood of ordinary Canadians. This is why we are concerned.

Members of the government are talking about \$80 million provided through this measure. To individuals and to families, \$80 million may seem a tremendous amount of money but let us look at it in perspective compared with other government programs. Here, we are talking about \$80 million to safeguard thousands of jobs and major Canadian industries. Mr. Speaker, we spent \$67 million to give 120,000 unemployed youths something to do for two summer months. Now, the government allocates only \$80 million to protect the economic heart of the nation, to protect major industries, especially in the two largest provinces. We had no hesitation in spending \$200 million on an exposition to entertain the nations of the

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world, but this \$80 million now represents only \$8 million per province to protect provincial industry. That is only half the sum of money we spent to embellish an aircraft carrier so that we could sell it for dockage fees.

There does not seem to be any sense of proportion in the government's approach to this major problem. Each province is going to look at this measure very carefully. The provinces are vitally concerned about their industries. Many provinces will accept this program at face value. My own province of Ontario will accept the measure, but I can assure you that it will be with tongue in cheek. I venture to presume that right now the Premier of Ontario and his cabinet are busy studying the possibility of introducing other measures to supplement this one which they know cannot cope with a problem of this magnitude.

If it requires money to solve this problem, perhaps there could be a simple way of creating an absolute solution. The hon. member for Victoria-Haliburton (Mr. Scott), one of my colleagues, told me of an idea which I thought had a great deal of merit, and which he said had been given to him by his constituents. Why isn't consideration being given by the government to paying this surcharge for the various industries affected? We do not know how much money may be involved. It could be a tremendous sum, but we do know that \$80 million is not going to pay the bill. The government itself has admitted that it will not pay the bill.

When we consider the millions of dollars necessary for the administration of the new government bureau that will be set up to carry out this program, the millions of dollars that will be paid out in welfare to people who will be out of work and the tremendous sums of money that will be needed for retraining and shifting from area to area our needy people who want jobs, we know that we are not talking about just \$80 million. We are talking about countless millions of dollars. So, why not consider ways and means of halting and blunting the impact of such a surcharge before it gets out of hand?

The hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson) put his finger on the crux of the issue so far as agriculture is concerned when earlier today he asked what will happen to the millions and millions of dollars worth of agricultural products directly affected by the surcharge. It is true that many agricultural commodities are not affected by it, but there are many commodities that are affected simply by those provisions of this bill which deal with processors. Any primary agricultural product that is touched in any way becomes a processed product, and there are many commodities that I do not believe the government has considered in this context. I would like to give two examples. One was brought to my attention by the hon. member for Malpeque (Mr. MacLean) and a number of my other maritime colleagues. This product is not of primary importance to Canada, but this is a good illustration of what can happen. I am referring to the \$3 million worth of blueberries that we export to the United States which are now subject to the surcharge, under the regulations since they are a processed commodity because they are frozen. The berries remain in their original form but are frozen, and therefore are classified as processed