

Employment Support Bill

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, may I suggest that you were right in the first place. We should have followed your lead. What has been suggested by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) constitutes a new amendment and not an amendment to the amendment presented by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent). Consequently, I ought not to have made the suggestion that I made.

Mr. Baldwin: Perhaps we could adjourn for ten minutes so that the government can make up its mind.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Does the Chair understand that the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River has changed his mind and does not wish the Chair to put the amendment?

Mr. Reid: It appears to me that the amendment, Mr. Speaker, is technically out of order, and I would withdraw it on those grounds.

Motion (Mr. Reid) withdrawn.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to make a speech. I seem to have misunderstood the minister. Perhaps it was my fault. I understood that the minister was prepared to go along with the amendment which required disclosure to be made public once a quarter, rather than once a month. If that is what he meant, that is fine by me. He did not move any amendment. If he meant that he will be prepared to make public disclosure once every three months instead of once every month, we would be prepared to accommodate him. I see he is shaking his head. In short, he does not agree to any disclosure by the companies to which he is going to make these grants. That being so, there is no sense in moving any amendment. We will just let the amendment of the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) stand.

Mr. Baldwin: Mr. Speaker, in my desire to be helpful may I suggest that if the government wants to take 15 minutes to decide what it wants to do and how to do it, I am sure the House would give them the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. The point raised by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin) might constitute a good suggestion for the government but it cannot influence the Chair. The Chair must abide by the rules of the House, and the House has before it a motion moved by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent). Any amendment moved must be related to the motion before the House. Although it is not the responsibility of the Chair to make suggestions, I do not think the House should bring forward a new question relating to any other kind of report.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, I was intrigued by the comments of the minister in rejecting the proposed amendment which suggested, essentially, that since the government of Canada will pay out substantial amounts of money—in the neighbourhood of \$80 million—the government shall be required to make available information once a month as to how the money has been spent, the amount of each grant and the levels of employment and production in companies to which money has been given.

Although the minister said he did not agree with the position taken by the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) who, as he suggested, opposed any disclosure, after the minister had finished speaking he really accepted the position of the hon. member for Edmonton West, namely, that we should not make available to the public information as to how public money is to be spent.

The federal government and various provincial governments have had sad experiences in recent years with the expenditure of large amounts of money given in grants and loans at subsidized interest rates to private companies in order to provide for economic growth and employment, particularly in the have-not provinces. In light of the very large losses which have occurred to the public I would think that even the present government and the minister would have learned from experience that the best way to protect the public interest would be to provide as much information as possible as quickly as possible. I will give a couple of illustrations from past experience.

• (8:50 p.m.)

I am not now talking about the assistance which was given in the building of Canadian Pacific Railway; I am talking about the experience of the last five, six or ten years. Hundreds of millions of dollars have virtually gone down the drain because governments, federal, provincial and municipal thought they knew best. They made special deals with promoters, some of them with past experience and some without experience in industries which turned out to be of very little value. Let me mention a few illustrations to show that this has occurred in a number of provinces under different governments of different political stripes, yet all of them were marked by terrible disasters.

Let me begin with the province of Nova Scotia under a Conservative government. There is the heavy water plant in Cape Breton. I come from a have-not province so I know something about what it means when an area has large-scale unemployment and I can sympathize with any government, regardless of its political stripe, wanting to provide more employment in an area which suffers heavy unemployment. But here we are in the year 1971. The provincial government in Nova Scotia and the federal government in Ottawa have paid out in the neighbourhood of \$200 million—I am speaking from memory, but I do not think I am far wrong; it was certainly substantially more than \$100 million. We still do not know whether we shall have a plant which will ever produce any heavy water, and we certainly do not know whether it will produce heavy water at an economic price.

When that plant was proposed they were talking in terms of a plant costing \$10 million or \$15 million. I suggest to the minister that if we had had in that kind of plant the kind of disclosure we call for in this amendment, we would never have had an expense of between \$100 million and \$200 million because governments and the public would have demanded an accounting, an examination of the situation. An informed public would not have permitted that kind of expenditure on what may well be one of the most expensive failures this country has ever seen.

Similarly, in Nova Scotia we had the fiasco of Clairtone. The government of Nova Scotia in its desire to promote