

*Labour Adjustment Benefits*

ance pay conditions will be more generous. Workers will be entitled to severance pay after one year of service instead of five, as is the case at the present time. Employees will still receive two days' wages for each year of service, but the bill provides for a minimum of five days' wages and the present maximum of forty days' wages will be abolished.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I should like to point out that although industrial restructuring is necessary in our economy, the fact remains that it can have very harsh consequences for redundant employees. Society and especially government and employers have an obligation to balance the impact of these adjustments.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I shall be voting for Bill C-78, and I hope that this bill, which has a very human dimension, will receive the approval of the House.

● (1640)

[English]

**Mr. Thomas Siddon (Richmond-South Delta):** Mr. Speaker, not having been a member of the committee, I feel some reluctance in making the presentation I am about to make, but nonetheless I wish to bring forward a point of view on Bill C-78 which I have not yet heard expressed this afternoon in this chamber and which I think is rather pertinent.

It is well and good to help older folk who have worked many years—perhaps 20 or 30 years—in our work force avoid the trauma of unemployment when an industry town goes down or when there is a major dislocation due either to technological or economic restructuring, but I want to say this afternoon that one of my most serious concerns relates to the fact that there is no dignity associated with people who are forced to go into early retirement. In the case of an industry where the whole plant is not shut down, it seems rather ludicrous that we should place the employer in the position of being able to push older, more experienced and more skilled people out the back door in order to make room for young people who perhaps do not yet have the necessary skills and developed abilities and who might very well be in much demand in other sectors of our economy.

It bothers me that this bill seems to make it easy to go into early retirement and to draw a pension prematurely—amounting to some 60 per cent of average insurable earnings—from age 54 or, in some cases, from age 50 until a person reaches normal retirement age. I believe this reflects adversely on the general state of our economy, and it is not adequate for governments to continue this preoccupation with programs, programs and still more programs which are not in fact working because they are not getting to the heart of the problem.

These programs and make-work projects are in a sense only aspirins for a terminal illness, and the government opposite has not chosen to address that terminal illness. Palliatives cannot substitute for the important policy choices and decisions which must be made if we are to restore the state of health and

prosperity to our economy we once knew and, in fact, knew up until only a few short years ago.

I want to say something about five subjects in particular. First, Bill C-78 does not seem to bear any relationship to an over-all comprehensive industrial development plan which is so important to our nation.

The philosophy is wrong because it encourages people at the prime of their lives, when they have all the experience and knowledge in the world, to go into early retirement while other, younger people are brought into those jobs when perhaps in many cases they could be retrained and, with the whole concept of mobility, redirected into new technological disciplines and new challenging work.

Third, as other speakers have pointed out this afternoon, we see more layers of bureaucracy being added. It is the typical NDP socialist approach that we can add more bureaucratic jobs, and that at the same time we have to be peering constantly over people's shoulders, checking up on them and threatening them with penalties if they violate the rules, and then establish layer upon layer of rules and regulations with all the additional meetings, boards, expense accounts and paper shuffling that will entail. Once again we see that this emphasis on a new layer of bureaucracy—and in particular as represented by the Labour Adjustment Review Board—is part of the problem. The whole philosophy of more boards, programs and gimmicks is part of the problem and comes nowhere near to providing a solution.

As my colleague the hon. member for Brampton-Georgetown (Mr. McDermid) pointed out, the funding provided for this program is totally inadequate. It does not at all provide the kind of relief that would be fair and equitable. If we want to provide equity, we should do so for all workers beyond age 50 or age 54 instead of a select group which happens to live in certain depressed rural areas of Canada. We should not be laying off other workers—for example, in the aerospace industry or the automotive industry—in areas such as Brampton and southwestern Ontario or parts of Quebec, and saying: "Well, because you live near Montreal or Toronto, you will not be eligible for this program." The amount of funding is paltry and totally inadequate in terms of being able to provide the assistance that would be needed if we wanted to do justice, given the premise on which this program is based, to all those who have contributed for many years to our work force.

● (1650)

This program is an illusion of action, Mr. Speaker, because it only adds to Canada's declining productivity. It takes the most skilled, the most experienced, the most knowledgeable and toughened people who have been in the work force for 20 or 30 years, and puts them out to pasture. What we really need is to get our young people reoriented into new skills and keep the older people working. They want to work, Mr. Speaker, and as a matter of human dignity they should be entitled to and be given every opportunity to work. Instead, their employers are being encouraged to put them out to pasture, albeit in a very mediocre way through this program.