

Labour

hear the testimony of older workers who have experienced what it is like to face this situation, it will persuade the Government to make amendments and change its approach.

Finally, let me deal with one part of the Bill which disturbs me a great deal. Pursuant to this legislation, the Government is setting up an economic program which is being delivered not by the Government, not by the public authorities who are responsible for it, but by private enterprise. As our critic for privatization, I must say that this is the ultimate cop-out on the part of the public authority. This program has some serious faults yet the Government is abdicating entirely its responsibility in administering it. If someone complains to the deposit institution which will administer this program that they have not received their cheque for the month, the deposit institution will not feel responsible. It will be able to say that it is the Government's fault. If the person in turn goes to his or her Member of Parliament to complain that he or she does not have the cheque, the Department of Labour will be able to say that it is the fault of the deposit institution.

A program that is the responsibility of the Government will not be run by the Government, by public servants or by people whose commitment is to serve the workers, but by people whose fundamental commitment is to make money, quite rightly, as a profit-making institution. I think this is an extremely dangerous precedent. This approach is extremely dangerous for older workers.

I hope the Government will listen to the people who will testify in front of the legislative committee on this Bill and take very seriously the complaints that I have already received with respect to the decision to put the administration of a public program into the hands of private, profit-making institutions.

On behalf of hundreds and probably thousands of older workers in my community and communities across the country, while it is good that this legislation will be passed in principle, let us get it right in detail. Let us make sure that in the legislative committee the points I talked about today, and other points that have been

raised by my colleague will be taken into consideration before the Bill comes back to us for final passage.

• (1800)

Mr. Lyle Kristiansen (Kootenay West—Revelstoke): Mr. Speaker, I think it is very appropriate that I should have the opportunity to address a few comments to the House on Bill C-8, an Act to amend the Department of Labour Act.

One of the reasons it is appropriate is that I worked for some 15 years in a plant that was designated under the ILAP, which later became the MILAP, the Modified Industry and Labour Adjustment Program, as it was applied to the workers of my constituency. That occurred following the 1984 general election.

I was the Member of Parliament for Kootenay West from 1980 to 1984, and one of the last things I was able to do as a Member before I had my four years off for good behaviour was to get the Central Kootenay Regional District designated under the ILAP program at approximately the same time as was the constituency of Nanaimo—Alberni. Those were the first two constituencies in British Columbia, and I believe in western Canada, to be designated under that program.

I was still an employee of Kootenay Forest Products sawmill in Nelson during my first term as a Member of Parliament, and up until about three weeks after the September 1984 election. About two weeks after that election, I reported back to work and two weeks later, the mill was permanently closed. We became the first industrial operation in British Columbia to be so designated and in which senior employees were able to benefit from the terms of the labour adjustment program.

Because of the actions of the Government that was elected in September of 1984, we were also the last industrial operation in British Columbia, and I believe in western Canada, to benefit from that program. I suppose that is a new version of the saying, the first shall be last and the last shall be first. In our case, that was exactly the situation.

I was some ten years too young to directly benefit from the program. It felt good to know that some of my activities and those of the former Hon. Member for Nanaimo—Alberni, Ted Miller, who along with me fought for several years to see that western resource industries would be able to benefit from the terms of the