

Adjournment Debate

and other officials can be made to follow. When there are instances in which the public interest is being deflected and diverted because of the conduct of present or former officials, we will then have a forum in which to make the complaint and where the officials must answer for their wrongdoing. We will not again find ourselves in the kind of mess we have been in during these past weeks, arguing over something which is of vital importance to the people of Cape Breton and, indeed, to all the people of Canada.

Mr. Jim Peterson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Economic Development and Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Halifax West (Mr. Crosby) is not the only person in the House who is concerned about unemployment and about jobs in Cape Breton. We recognize that there is serious difficulty in that situation. At the moment markets for heavy water are closed because in Canada we have adopted a policy that we will not sell nuclear generation facilities to any country which has not signed the international Non-Proliferation Treaty. We are not prepared to sacrifice the prospect of the peaceful use of atomic energy for the betterment of humanity everywhere just to earn export dollars. This is a critical issue which we have pursued and we are prepared to follow up on it. I hope that the Hon. Member will agree that we have a responsibility, above and beyond everything else, to ensure that there is non-proliferation.

We are trying to create jobs in that depressed area of the country. There is under consideration a coal liquefaction plant which would use coal to produce gasoline from existing reserves. If the feasibility plans prove up we can look forward to expenditures of perhaps \$1 billion to provide direct employment for 1,200 coal miners and 800 workers in the liquefaction plant. This enterprise would take advantage of the unique availability of Cape Breton coal, Sable Island gas and the facilities of a closed refinery on Canso Strait.

We have been working on this proposition and the Hon. Member for Halifax West has not come forward with any concrete alternative. All he does is bemoan the fate of some people who may lose their jobs, and complain that he does not like the way things are being done to create jobs in that area. He has not offered any positive alternative. We are very concerned about what is happening to those workers and their families, Mr. Speaker. That is why we are trying to come up with projects that would be of benefit to all Canadians, particularly those faced with the prospect of losing their jobs in that area. This is the object and the desire of the Government in the days, weeks and years ahead.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE COMMISSION—DELAY IN
MAKING PAYMENTS UNDER WORK PROGRAMS IN BRITISH
COLUMBIA. (B) REQUEST THAT MINISTER MAKE PERSONAL
INVESTIGATION

Mr. Lyle S. Kristiansen (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, on February 2 I raised a question in the House regarding delays in UIC payments and payments under the Employment Bridging Assistance Program. I should like to say something that is not often said in the House, particularly by Members of

the Opposition, that after months of complaints, substantial progress has been shown by the Department of Employment and Immigration. They have virtually eliminated long delays in British Columbia in payments to people under that program.

• (1820)

When I realized that I would be participating in the adjournment debate today, I did some checking among my colleagues and the various project sponsors in my constituency. They in fact report that the long delays seem now to be in hand. I thank the Department and its officials for getting at that, and just hope that we never again find ourselves with the kind of backlog which was so evident just a matter of a few short weeks ago.

I was also advised today that a new committee has been formed in my constituency among all the Employment Bridging Assistance Program sponsors called the West Kootenay Committee on Forest Employment Development. Yesterday they wrote to the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy), with copies to myself, and to various provincial officials with a number of recommendations they feel may help prevent some of the same problems and other possible future problems. I would like to touch on some of those recommendations as food for thought and hopefully as prods to action.

The first recommendation was that the Employment Bridging Assistance Program be extended to December 31, 1983. We are still awaiting word of this hoped-for extension of that program. Hopefully, participants who are working on those programs now might continue to draw payments until perhaps June 30, despite the fact that payments would otherwise expire by March 1, in order to allow for a sensible conversion over to the NEED program for some of those participants whose benefits are expiring. Some of those projects are worthwhile. Hopefully, if we can integrate those two programs in such a way that the programs themselves can continue, it will be of benefit not only to the workers involved but to the forest industry in those particular regions.

I know my time is fast running out, so I will not continue to list the various recommendations at this point. Again I thank the Government and the officers of the Department, particularly since they have taken a lot of brow-beating by some of us over the past number of weeks and months, for finally getting some of those matters straightened out. I ask them again to keep a close eye on the situation and perhaps give some additional authority to local forestry or employment officials, if payments should be delayed beyond three weeks in the future, so that locally they may have the authority to be able to meet emergency payments until such time as the broader questions can be straightened out.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rémi Bujold (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, it goes without