

Canada Labour (Standards) Code

of Canada. We could take a big step forward now if we considered all sound suggestions in a serious light. Mr. Speaker, this is the challenge of the seventies: Full employment for all Canadians. In this fast-changing nation I believe it is a tragic situation when people are thrown out of work at ages when they cannot obtain another job. I sincerely believe this situation could be cleared up if all private industrial pensions were made portable from coast to coast in any industrial business. Thus, when an employee is laid off he would be able to take his pension with him to a new job, if he is fortunate to get one. It would prevent employers from saying a man is too old because he would not fit into their pension schemes. I believe it would also eliminate most of the problems confronting a person who is 65 years of age when he retires. Over a man's working years he would contribute, along with his employers, into the pension plan and he could retire with no financial worries about his future.

Mr. Heath Macquarrie (Hillsborough): It is very easy, Mr. Speaker, to begin my few remarks with commendation of the efforts and the methods of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). I want to assure him right away that, both distorting and plagiarizing Shakespeare, I come to praise the bill, not to bury it—although I have noticed in the private members' hour that the two motivations sometimes coincide. I think at 4.30 p.m. I am safe from that dismal denouement.

• (4:30 p.m.)

As I say, it is very easy to support the work of the hon. member because I am in accord with most of the measures he brings into this House. When he is not discussing foreign policy or ideology generally in the political sense or economic policies in principle, and discusses the place of the dispossessed in our society, enlightenment in the labour legislation and, certainly, procedure—last Tuesday with regard to research—I am enthusiastically his supporter. If it were not for his modesty and my excessive laconic candour, I would be inclined to say in some fulsome way that he is one of the greatest parliamentarians seen in this chamber for many years.

I should like to praise him a little more, but he might think that I am pressing him in his role of chancellor of a certain university and that I might be ambitious, like some others, who find that honours come upon them by degrees rather than dissertation.

Mr. Dinsdale: No commercials.

Mr. Macquarrie: My friend from Brandon-Souris says "No commercials," and I shall heed his advice. I want to say that this is important legislation and it is more limited than many of the measures the hon. member has introduced in the past. As he has indicated, it deals with very important problems. Through the years in our society there have been many grievous disparities between labour and management. In the present day we find disparities of a serious nature developing within the

[Mr. Turner (London East).]

labour sector as well. But this is not the particular aspect with which the bill deals. I quite agree with the hon. member who preceded me that the peremptory discharge of employees who have rendered faithful service is an outrage upon a civilized society. It has happened far too often in recent years.

There are many factors in our society which disrupt economic patterns and industrial set-ups. Quite often large bodies of people, through no fault of their own but because of technological or technical changes, governmental decisions or conditions in the market, find themselves cast into the ashcan of the unemployed. This is sometimes done brutally. I think the hon. member, in attempting to remove the guillotine from employees such as he mentioned, is very much on the side of the angels. I am against the guillotine in Parliament and I am against it in labour relations.

One of the things which has troubled us in recent years is the situation facing our students, although some of these may not precisely come under the three-month period of the hon. member's bill. They have had difficulty finding jobs which will assist them in their costly educational careers. We know that last year and the year before many were not able to find work. I have heard many shocking cases of those who were able to find work being discharged at the whim of the employer, with no redress and no warning.

I often think of the great responsibility that some of these callous and cynical employers bear in our society where there is great anxiety because youth is in revolt. How could they be otherwise than distressed and dissatisfied in a system which so often lacks reason and compassion? So, Mr. Speaker, this effort to ameliorate these conditions, to give the required measure of reason and compassion, is certainly a move in the right direction.

I also commend the hon. member's sense of balance. As he pointed out in his brief and succinct explanation, the employee must also act reasonably. I suppose it is a fundamental of civilized societies that the people comprising them must generally act reasonably one toward the other. It is a reflection, of course, of our occasional, if not frequent—and some would say eternal—irrationality that we cannot count upon man's essential nature but must legislate acceptable and minimum codes of behaviour and minimum laws of contract. This, of course, is what we are doing in this Parliament when we pass legislation of one kind or another. I believe this is important because we live in a society of much enforced unemployment. We have many victims of technological change. It is important as well because we have great mobility in our society.

I think this is the underpinning of an essential contractual relationship, and I am thoroughly in accord with it. I agree with the hon. member for London East (Mr. Turner) who said that it deals with part of a very serious situation. When this bill comes to committee, as I am sure it will, I hope it will receive the support of hon. members from all parts of the House.

Some hon. Members: Question.