

Labour Adjustment Benefits

At it stands now, the bill will be even more effective in alleviating hardships experienced by all workers affected by lay-offs in industries and communities designated under the industrial labour adjustment program. For instance, I should like to thank the hon. member for Rosedale (Mr. Crombie) for his suggestion that the definition of industrial restructuring include technological change. I also appreciate the suggestion of the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) that we should amend Clause 4 to ensure that the five members of the Labour Adjustment Review Board include one member from labour and one from management. I also welcome the recommendation that the Labour Adjustment Review Board should not have the power to impose penalties on people who make false or misleading statements in order to meet the eligibility requirements for benefits. This is an eminently reasonable suggestion. A penalty should only be imposed by a court, and therefore the committee removed this power from Section 18.

While the board retains the power under Section 18 to revoke an employee's certification for benefits, the fairness of the provision is strengthened now that it allows the employee 30 days to appeal against the revocation of a certificate.

Another change of the utmost importance is the amendments to Clause 23. This clause authorizes an officer of the board to enter premises to inspect in order to determine a firm's eligibility. The recommendation draws a clear distinction between a private dwelling and other buildings so as to restrict inspections to commercial and industrial locations and to ensure that an officer can enter only with the authorization of the minister on a case by case basis. I thank the hon. member for Brampton-Georgetown (Mr. McDermid) for raising this issue.

[Translation]

Further on, Mr. Speaker, in order to tighten responsibility for administering the act, Clause 30 has been amended to provide that the minister shall report to Parliament on a quarterly instead of an annual basis.

The role of joint planning committees has been expanded in an amendment to Clause 31. The objective of those committees is now to eliminate the need for terminating employment instead of merely minimizing the consequences.

In addition to the changes made in committee, there are further amendments I should like to consider with you today. Five are aimed at improving the French version of the bill. There is Clause 3, and then paragraph 3 of Clause 12 and Clause 18.

[English]

There are also amendments intended to improve the English version—two in Clause 4, one in Clause 25, and a proposal to improve the syntax of an amendment accepted in committee is suggested for Clause 29.

Others are of more substance. One amendment proposed by committee members is a clarification of Clause 16 which will ensure that the pre-retirement benefit under the bill is over

and above worker compensation benefits or other disability payments. In other words, no such deductions will be made from benefits. I am particularly grateful to the hon. member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie (Mr. Malépart) for his having forcefully raised this point in committee.

A second important amendment will provide that where for good cause, such as absence or worker's compensation, an employee has not obtained the full minimum of 1,000 hours of work in any year, he or she may still be deemed to be in compliance with the requirement and will be eligible for the benefit. Here I am particularly grateful for the brief submitted by people from the eastern townships and to several members of the committee, including the hon. member for Gamelin (Mr. Portelance), the hon. member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie and the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Dubois).

The committee also expressed a concern that people currently receiving adjustment assistance benefits should continue to receive the same level of benefits under the proposed legislation they are receiving now. I understand their concern and fully support the principle. Therefore, I recommend the draft amendment to Clause 34, which reflects in good part the interventions made by the hon. member for Lotbinière and the hon. member for Montreal-Sainte-Marie.

I also recognize the concern of hon. members that the bill provide for retroactive designations, and so propose that Clause 4 be amended accordingly.

[Translation]

In concluding, I am most appreciative of the work done by the members of this committee, who have given so generously of their time and attention and have helped to improve this very urgent and necessary legislation.

[English]

I thank hon. members of all parties and seek their support for the speedy passage of this needed legislation.

Mr. Joe Reid (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, as everyone in this House will agree, it comes as a bit of a surprise that we are addressing ourselves to Bill C-78 today. It is a bill which will provide some measure of support to laid-off workers and, goodness knows, under the conditions which exist today any help is better than what most of them are receiving presently.

● (1530)

This bill was given first reading on June 29, 1981, second reading on November 6, 1981, and two weeks ago was still in committee. All of a sudden it has assumed great importance and, goodness knows, any bill which relates to over one million unemployed is worthy of urgent consideration. But that situation has existed for some time, Mr. Speaker. No matter that the announcement was made that the printed copies of the amended bill were not available, no matter that there was no previous notice of the consideration that must be given to this bill so that members could take it back to their constituents and the people affected, the bill has come forward to take the place of a regularly and duly allotted day. In order to avoid embarrassment, established rules of procedure were thwarted