

with the income to sustain a family in a northern community. Unfortunately, we will need a lot of access to this program.

I read in some of the documents I have that at the most, 5,000 people will be served by this program. Without much difficulty, I could find 5,000 men and women in northwestern Ontario who would need this program. Their employment will be taken away from them because of economic conditions, because of the high dollar and because of their inability to compete with the Americans or on the world market. They will lose their jobs because of government policy, because of a shortage of wood fibre or because the mineral body has run out. This may not happen tomorrow. It might not happen for 10, 15 or 20 years, but the great Hemlo mine will disappear and with it the boom of Marathon and surrounding communities. Those people will also be in need of a program. By the time that ore body runs out, those workers will be eligible for the Older Worker Adjustment Program.

I can find those 5,000 workers today just in northwestern Ontario. I can go to my own community of Thunder Bay and look at those who work in the grain industry in which in excess of 1,200 men and women were laid off. Add to that the people who work the boats on the Great Lakes and the people who work in the ports downstream from Thunder Bay. Many of them are in that particular age group. Will they be helped by this program? I am not so sure. It does not deal with cyclical lay-offs. It does not deal with the reality of a number of grain-handlers in Thunder Bay who have not worked enough weeks in the last two or three years to allow them to continue to receive unemployment insurance benefits. The bureaucrats will say that they cannot be eligible for this program because they are not permanently laid off. The reality is that there will be fewer and fewer permanent employees working in those elevators from here on in.

Yes, there is a seniority provision that pretty well guarantees that those who have worked there long enough will retain their jobs, although we are seeing people with 15 and 20 years seniority being laid off now. Yes, they will get called back, but there are others in the community who will not be called back, and that is also something with which we have to deal.

### *Labour*

• (1700)

The Government of Canada has known the needs of older workers for a number of years. I am sure that in opposition the Conservatives demanded programs of the Liberals to provide protection for older workers. I know we did, because we recognized that on one hand we had an ageing population. On the other hand we recognized the unfortunate realities of how employers view older men and women as being less of a positive investment than a younger worker. We recognized that employers did not look at the quality that they would be getting. Quite frankly, many of these older workers have a lot to contribute, have a lot of knowledge and have a lot of experience.

In societies of days gone past we would look to those older workers for leadership—not just those below 65 but those well above 65—in terms of where we should be going from here, our teachers. Today we tend to put them on the slag heap and leave them to rot.

In addition to dealing with the specific lay-off problems, what we as a society should be doing is making it possible for all our people to afford to live in today's society. As part of that we should make sure that more and more people can afford to retire earlier than they do today. Yes, we have a modest step forward with the changes to the Canada Pension Plan providing for the early out option. Some people are taking advantage of it. I know that between 1984 and 1988 a number of people in the riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, and in fact northwestern Ontario, took advantage of it. That did help. That was a form of older worker adjustment.

People of Atikokan took advantage of it. Those who had been laid off and could find no other work were able to get some level of income. I think that we as a society have to work for the day when people can afford to leave the workforce at 55 or at 60 so that in turn those employment opportunities are available for our younger people. We must ensure that they have the income level that is appropriate for their needs and allows them to continue on as full participants in society in a volunteer capacity or whatever capacity they choose.

I do not want to go on much longer. I know that my other colleagues want to participate today. I believe it is important that we do provide these services. It is also important that we provide even more than what we are providing in this legislation. I would encourage if not demand the Province of Ontario and the Government of