

Labour Adjustment Benefits

but, most important, we must use the Canadian home market primarily for the development of Canadian industry as a Canadian home market for Canadians. As long as we are not prepared to do that, we will wind up with all sorts of industries which will be out of business on a cyclical basis. They will need readjustment or adjustment grants.

Mr. McDermid: They will be designated.

Mr. Blenkarn: My friend says they will be designated. We in Canada are tired of being designated. It is about time we had a government which was prepared to be Canadian first, to let Canadian working people be first, to let Canadian people have Canadian opportunities and to let the Canadian market be available for Canadians. The fact that someone might be able to produce a shoe for a cent or so cheaper than is produced in Canada should not mean that those who have produced shoes should forever get sixty cents of eligible wages until the age of 65.

Mr. Jack Shields (Athabasca): Mr. Speaker, in this debate on Bill C-78 I would like to congratulate the Minister of Labour (Mr. Caccia) on bringing forward his first bill. It must give one a certain amount of pride to do so. I am sorry, however, that the bill does not really address the problems which face the Canadian people. I realize fully the minister's reaction when he thinks about people who have been working in one industry for a long period of time—perhaps 20 or 25 years—and then when all of a sudden the economic climate is such that an industry shuts its doors and lays many people off. It must be a devastating blow to people who have made a career in an industry and in a work force to find it shattered overnight.

● (2120)

I suggest to the minister and the government that we should not be trying to remedy the problems the economy causes but rather the economy itself. I do not think any man who has worked 20 to 25 years for an employer wants to leave that job, say that he cannot do anything else, that after all those years the plant is being shut down, he is out of a job, can no longer be the breadwinner and now must go on welfare, which is basically what it will amount to. That is not what the breadwinner or the woman wants. What those people want are jobs.

What are we doing about it? Unemployment in Canada is at an all-time high. Close to one million people across this country are now unemployed. A good 50 per cent are young people under the age of 24. Over half a million people under the age of 24 today are unemployed across this country.

What are we doing for them? We are not addressing that problem. It never ceases to amaze me, when I come into this House, this hallowed hall, and recognize the talent that sits on the Liberal benches, Conservative benches and indeed we must even say there are one or two in the little red rump who could address the problems facing our country. Instead, by agreement we spend a day on a bill that is only a band-aid. Certainly it addresses the problem that faces a work force hit

with an economic downturn where plants close and employees are thrown out of work. It does that.

What are we doing for the industry, because of the very direct attack on the energy industry, in central or western Canada? What are we doing to readjust that to get a viable industry back to work? What are we doing to attract back the 300 drilling rigs that have moved south to the United States, Australia or the Middle East? Absolutely nothing. We are floundering along.

The government brings in a national energy policy which says we are now going to try to get Canadian ownership of the oil industry. Let us look at what happens. The government borrows money on the foreign market at great expense to the Canadian people in order to buy Petrofina. It had to go to the foreign markets to borrow that money. It could have let Petrofina operate under foreign control and said that somewhere down the line it would have to make available for Canadian purchase so much of its stock in order that it would be more Canadian. It could have said it must reach a target of 50 per cent Canadian ownership. The Canadian people could have seen it was a good investment on the open market. That was one way.

By going to the foreign markets, the money is owed outside the country. What is the difference? Where is the Canadian ownership the government talks about? It is just an illusion, just a myth. There is no way we can look at Petro-Canada's purchase of Petrofina as anything but switching dollars from one basket to the other. It is still foreign and will be for a long time. It becomes more expensive as our Canadian dollar goes down, and down it is going.

In the bill the minister talks about the increased responsibility of the employer and the government with regard to displaced employees. Why are they displaced? What has happened to the economic climate in Canada that a situation has been created where factories are closing, bankruptcies are occurring and unemployment is at an all-time high? All the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) does to address the situation is to grease the rails so that we go into a deeper recession. My constituents in Athabasca are frightened, as are people right across this country, by what is happening to our country.

No longer can Canadians see security in a job. When they go home at night, they cannot be sure they will have a job to go to the next day. No longer can they plan on owning their homes in ten years because they do not know what the interest rate on their mortgage is going to be. No longer do they believe they can send their children to post-secondary schools, universities or technical schools, and launch them on a career.

Chaos has been created in our community. This is a beautiful country. We are probably the luckiest people in the world with the natural resources at our disposal, God-given. They are being abused by this incompetent government that cannot see past politics. It does not look at what is best for Canada. The Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has a great design for Canada. He says the universe will unfold as it should. However, it is going to unfold the way he wants it. I am distressed.