

Employment Support Bill

ernment encounters, that we are going to be of service to society.

I venture to believe that hon. members are sensitive to these remarks and that they are moved by the desire to serve their electorate in a constructive way. To that end, I believe that we should support the present administration and above all awaken the feelings of the population which requires such solutions as would allow it to find the well-being it needs and which it is incumbent upon us to provide; indeed all the members of this House have pledged themselves to this end during the last election campaign.

In respecting our undertakings, let us respect those who have elected us and let us work together to find this well-being, not in the government's interest but in the interest of the Canadian people.

● (9:10 p.m.)

[English]

Mr. Bruce Howard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, I want to intervene this evening to refer to some of the points that have been made in this wide ranging debate, perhaps answer some of the criticisms that have been made and offer some ideas that might help to elucidate the matter somewhat. We have had some interesting offerings in the debate so far. The one a moment ago from the hon. member for Joliette (Mr. LaSalle) was a valuable contribution. I listened to it with great interest. This afternoon we heard an excellent speech by the hon. member for Duvernay (Mr. Kierans) who offered some interesting ideas and suggestions that we listened to with great interest. The Liberal party is a unified party. It allows room for many shades of opinion, many views and sometimes some arguments among us. This afternoon the hon. member for Duvernay made a very valuable contribution. It was most interesting to all of us.

The other day I read in the paper that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) visited Saskatoon. When he rose to speak, his own party members applauded him. That was so unusual that it was worth a news item in the paper. I want to say that this is so common in the Liberal party that it is not an item for the newspapers. When the members of our party get together, we applaud our leader. Even though we may have violent debates on subjects, we are a unified party. We make a contribution to the topics before us.

Mr. Bell: Explain.

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): This bill is designed to tackle a particular problem. We have heard many contributions from members opposite. They complain that the bill does not do a lot of things they think it should. I want to say that this bill is not designed to eliminate inflation, change interest rates in Canada, cure warts or anything of that kind. It is designed to cure a specific problem of unemployment caused by a specific situation brought before us by the actions of the United States government. That is what the bill is designed to do and that is why it is handled in this particular way.

[Mr. La Salle.]

The bill is flexible enough to allow for a rapidly changing world situation and the possibility that we may be confronted with other situations of this kind by other governments throughout the world. For that reason the regulations that will go along with this bill are designed to allow for other eventualities.

I want to remind the hon. member for Kent-Essex (Mr. Danforth) that the trade situation that we have today is a very rapidly changing one. The rules of the game seem to be changed from hour to hour. There have been some announcements from Washington today that are of great interest to us and affect our situation considerably. There have been frequent announcements. We have to try and cope with a rapidly changing situation. The hon. member for Kent-Essex said that for once the government is not arrogant and admits that it does not have all the answers. It is true that we do not have all the answers. We have not even heard all the questions yet. As we hear those questions, perhaps we will be able to use legislation of this kind to solve the specific problems as they arise.

I want to answer some of the criticisms that were raised on the other side of the chamber during the course of this debate. The Leader of the Opposition raised a point, and I think I am quoting, that the government is going to have a good deal of discretion in connection with the regulations and the board will be left with a good deal of discretion under these regulations. Consequently, he said, we are obviously considering here a measure that is loose and open to abuse. With regard to discretion, the bill is designed to be broad enough in scope to take care of similar measures that might be taken by any other country in addition to what the United States has done with regard to a surtax on exports from Canada. That is why the bill is designed in this way.

The eligibility of criteria and the level of assistance considered suitable to deal with the disruptive effects of the U.S. surcharge may not be appropriate in other cases, so that new situations arising from trade restricting measures of other countries that might occur will require an independent evaluation of an entirely different set of regulations. That is why that kind of other situation would be handled under regulations that would be drawn up when the situation arose.

With regard to the degree of discretion that will be given to the board, it is not possible to determine in advance the precise impact of the surcharge on employment in individual plants. For that reason the applicable of standard criteria is not always going to fit. A plant might not have been in production during the base period called for in the bill. The object of this bill is to maintain employment, not to fit some tight set of rules. The rules are drawn in such a way as to take into consideration the possibility that a new plant may have come into operation. The workers in that plant need protection and assistance, the same as workers in a plant that has been in business for many years.

The Leader of the Opposition referred to the claim that at the end of the assistance period and before the grant is paid, the board may use its discretionary power not to