

Employment and Immigration

disparities, Bill C-27 officially enshrines regional disparities by stating for example that in some area eight unemployment stamps will be needed before benefits can be collected, that in some other area, because of regional disparities that were supposed to be stamped out, but the government was incapable of stamping out, there must be twice the number of stamps or, 15 stamps, or 11 contributions before benefits can be paid out.

● (2130)

If during all those years the government have been repeating, and leading us or the Canadian people to believe it could solve the problem of manpower or employment in Canada on the one hand and regional disparities on the other, it seems to me that with six extra months before the legislation is passed, it might implement what it promised and has been incapable of doing since 1962 at least. Mr. Speaker, what struck me in one of the first clauses of the bill is the shared cost provision, or work sharing. Mr. Speaker, let us look now for instance at the fiscal policy as it applies to companies or small businesses, and especially small businesses. It must be recognized that in Canada, small and medium businesses do not partake in the fiscal policy which applies to big multinational corporations or monopolies. Once they have paid their taxes companies are smothered as we can see in my area, in the Quebec city district and elsewhere. It is the case of companies with 300, 400 or 500 employees such as Thor Mills in Granby, Acton Shoe in Acton Vale, as practically in the whole shoe industry in Canada, especially in Quebec, because, 60 percent of the shoes we wear and buy in Canada are imported.

For a number of years we have been promised in the House reforms in textiles as well as in shoe and in furniture industries. One is inclined to think that we have to wait until all our factories are closed for the government finally to realize the situation and to start sympathizing with those industries which built our country, especially the shoe industry, the oldest industry in Quebec, which is now on the brink of bankruptcy. What is the reason for that? This is due to the volume of imports and to a number of economic considerations which result from the administration of the Federal government: taxation, importation, unemployment rate, salary levels. Furthermore, the Federal government has become the major competitor of private enterprise in Canada, with the Unemployment Insurance Act, in collusion with the provincial governments and Social welfare.

Mr. Speaker, having smothered many companies as we realize now, Bill C-27 is going to entrust the civil servants from the Unemployment Insurance Commission and from Canadian Manpower Centres with the administration sooner or later of the labour force working for companies with that new concept of work sharing. To start off, this policy will be presented to us as a very progressive social policy, a very understanding policy, well within the reach of employers.

Mr. Speaker, we know very well that before long, not years but months, the civil servants will act as masters with the employers who will want to get contracts with Manpower and to benefit from the so-called work-sharing legislation.

[Mr. Rondeau.]

We are going to put employers at the service of the federal government. We are going to make them dependent upon the federal government, just as we have made employees, over the years, dependent so to speak upon the Unemployment Insurance Commission. We have realized over the years that unemployment insurance and social welfare have caused workers to lose their incentive for work and their initiative. I shall explain later. After a few years, we shall realize that business people too have lost their initiative as a result of a greater involvement of the government in the operation of their companies and with their employees, to the point that they may feel that the government is in charge. As a matter of fact, we already have indications of that in Quebec.

Certain people in Quebec are complaining that some companies are about to close their doors. Why? Because business has somewhat lost confidence in the provincial administration. Business people are afraid of it. Why?

Because when we have been through experiences like St. Jerome, employers come and tell them: "Why invest more and more if tomorrow the Quebec government is going to interfere with our business?" That is why many employers in Quebec are wondering what the future of their industry will be and stop investing, roll back and wait until the government offers to buy their business.

I personally know of 4 businessmen who reduced their staff and the number of jobs in their plant because they had lost confidence in the government regarding private initiative. Now, they want to get back the capital they have invested in their business, and the best way to do it is to tell the government: "We are no longer interested in producing, we are no longer interested in contributing to the economy of Quebec or Canada." Well, they are waiting for offers, and the government of Quebec, with its ever increasing unemployment rate, has to bow down to those businessmen and grant them tax deductions or any other deductions to keep them in the province. Mr. Speaker, this bill on unemployment is going to produce exactly the same economic attitude in Quebec as in the rest of Canada, and before long the employers will also become wards of the federal government. The majority of the unemployed, contrary to what is commonly said, because some claim that the unemployed are lazy—

Mr. Boulanger: Who said that?

Mr. Rondeau: Prosper, first of all. I have often heard government members say in the House that the unemployed are lazy. Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Boulanger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please!

Mr. Rondeau: I should like to point out that the microphone of the hon. member for Mercier (Mr. Boulanger) does not work because he never uses it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. The hon. member for Mercier on a point of order.

Mr. Rondeau: I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the floor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please!