

and the morale among the students. It was better for all concerned.

At the same time, it reduced the unemployment levels in the province of Manitoba. When it was finally adopted by the Vander Zalm government precisely the same thing happened in British Columbia. The older teachers were able to retire. Younger teachers who had been waiting for years in some cases for jobs in the workforce were able to move into the schools and become teachers. As a result everyone was pleased.

This is something that could be done with public sector employees all across the country. Even in the federal Public Service it would allow people to retire at an earlier age. Younger people could move into the Public Service. We would see a tremendous reduction in the level of unemployment, simply by taking the step of lowering the voluntary retirement age to 55, with no penalty on the pension. It would be good economically and it would be good by lowering the unemployment rates. It is a model that has been used for years in those thriving countries of northern and western Europe which have that democratic socialist tradition I have been talking about.

It does not simply work in the public sector workforce. It also works in the private sector workforce as well. Mr. Speaker, you will probably recall that there was an International Woodworkers of America strike back in 1986 in British Columbia and that it carried on until 1987. One of the main demands of the union strikers in that dispute was the right to retire at age 60 with no loss of pension benefits, whereas before the retirement age was 65. Another was the right to retire at a age younger than 55 with only minor losses in pension income.

That long strike which dragged through the late summer, the fall, and the winter of 1986 and early 1987 resulted in a settlement. Many of the older workers in the forest industry workforce are people who work hard in sawmills and planer mills, in shake and shingle operations, and in logging operations. When you get up in years it becomes more and more difficult to sustain that kind of work every day. Even though these people are strong and committed, it becomes very difficult when you reach the age of between 60 and 65 to continue doing

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that kind of labour on a day to day basis without having health problems.

As a result of the settlement of that strike in the private sector, many of those workers did not come back to work after the strike. They simply took advantage of the early retirement benefit that the union had won for them and that the companies had agree to. They were able to leave the workforce. Between 1982 and 1986 my community of Port Alberni, which has a population of about 19,000 within the city, had lost about 2,500 workers in the forest industry. As a result of the change in the pension plans of the International Woodworkers of America, hundreds of young people were able to move into the workforce. People who had not worked for five or six years as a result of the decline in the forest employment in that area were able to move into the workforce as the older people retired and enjoyed the benefits of their pensions without penalty.

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It was a terrific boost to employment in our region without any further trees being cut down, without any further development taking place in the forest industry. What happened was that everybody was happy as a result of that move.

The forest industry has not gone broke as a result. It is perfectly able to pay those pensions. In addition, it has new, enthusiastic, young workers who are coming into the system, who are no longer on unemployment insurance and welfare, and who are feeling good about being back in the workforce again and contributing productively to the local economy, to the provincial economy, and to the economy of Canada.

That is one thing I think the government could consider. It is something that has been proven elsewhere in the world. It is possible to lower the voluntary retirement age to 55 with no loss of pension benefits so that people can leave the workforce earlier and that young people who are currently unemployed and drawing welfare or unemployment insurance, or working at part-time jobs for very low rates of income and not feeling very much self-esteem as a result, can get into the workforce on a continuing basis and do what they want to do as continuing workers in the Canadian economy.

It astounded me, when the member for Burlington talked about the various training programs and the adjustment programs included in Bill C-21 or under the