

This motion encourages equality. The Bill does nothing to make equality a fact.

Mr. Derek Blackburn (Brant): Mr. Speaker, I too have a few words to say with respect to Motion No. 1. It relates to a serious problem in the workforce today, or perhaps one just outside the workforce. I refer to the problem of those in their forties and fifties who have been laid off, whose jobs have been terminated or those who have lost their jobs because the plants or factories in which they work have been shut down. At this stage of their lives they cannot find gainful or meaningful employment. In other words, Governments at the municipal, provincial and federal levels are telling these men and women that they are too old for the workplace. They are being told that they are no longer needed. That is the impression with which they are being left. These people should be recognized just as we recognize other minorities in society who are in critical positions with respect to gaining employment.

I think it is absolutely tragic for men or women, who started work in their late teens or early twenties and spent 25 or 30 years in the workplace only to find that they no longer have jobs. They have worked hard for their employers. They have attempted to save a few bucks. They have tried to educate their children and to pay off their mortgages. They try still to provide a fairly decent standard of living for their families. Then all of a sudden they receive the pink slip. Or perhaps through no fault of their own, the factory in which they work goes belly-up, or the business in which they are employed shuts down and their jobs no longer exist.

We cannot stop progress. We cannot stop scientific and technological development in the workplace. However, we can surely devise means by which to put these men and women back to work. If we can put men on the moon then I think we can spend the time and make the effort to develop careers for people in their forties and fifties.

It is a fact that the private and public sectors have devised all types of interesting pre-retirement schemes. All types of incentives have been devised to encourage an employee to leave his or her place of employment at the age of 50 or 52 instead of waiting until the age of 60 or 65. By taking such action what are we really doing? We are telling these people that they are no longer required. We are saying that they are no longer important in terms of input into the workplace and in terms of earning a living and looking after themselves. We are saying: "Here is the golden handshake, goodbye and good riddance". We are saying that we do not need them anymore; they have become redundant because of their age. That is a growing tragedy not only in our country but in the United States and western Europe. Governments at all levels are really not putting their minds and hearts toward some kind of effective solution to this problem.

• (1210)

I do not think that there is anything more emotionally distressing or depressing than for a person who has been used to being a useful contributor to his community to be laid

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off, forgotten and bidden farewell at the age of 50 or 55. We just do not care about those people anymore. This is one of the great problems all Members of Parliament face daily in their constituency offices.

I am not trying to be emotional about this, but I have had visits from men in their 50s who were weeping simply because they had been out of work for a year or two, their unemployment insurance benefits were gone and their children were probably trying to help them financially. That is something which they almost resent because it embarrasses them. A few of them have actually had to go on welfare or take jobs on a temporary or part-time basis, something which again is very degrading. Surely, with the amount of money this Chamber expends in the name of the Canadian taxpayer we should be able to devise programs, policies and retraining schemes to assist these people.

I cannot prove this, but I am convinced that in virtually every employment centre in Canada, those who are given the last opportunities for retraining are those who are in their 50s, those who no longer have dependent children. They are being discriminated against because of their age. We seem to think that the last 10 or 15 working years of a person's life are no longer important. They may no longer be important to the state but those last 10 or 15 working years are still very, very important to the person. Even with some kind of generous pre-retirement program, he or she does not want to go home at the age of 50 or 51 to sit there and stare out of the window for the next 15 or 20 years.

Politicians in Canada range in age from 21 to 60. This present generation of politicians is supposedly in control of things, but politicians are going to be held morally accountable some day for the way they are treating those in their 40s and 50s who cannot find work. We cannot provide training and expertise for these people so that they can live out the rest of their working years in dignity and security by paying their own way. That is all they want.

I hope that the Minister responsible for employment will come up with programs which are much more effective for these people we are casting aside, people to whom we are saying, if not out loud then certainly by implication or inference: "You are no longer needed, you are redundant, you are just a UI number, a welfare number and that is it". Certainly that is the impression those people are getting. I hope that all of us will put our minds and hearts together and come up with some kind of legislation to assist these people

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 1 standing in the name of the Hon. Member for Yorkton—Melville (Mr. Nystrom). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.