in place to ensure that the legislation accomplishes its purposes.

I thank the minister once again, as I did in the earlier debate, for having demonstrated some reason and openness, particularly in committee. Many hon. members over here wish the bill were divided into two parts—one dealing with labour adjustment benefits, and the other dealing strictly with amendments to the Canada Labour Code. While there are some limitations to the Labour Code amendments in place, certainly one relates to the other. While there are some limitations to the progress made in these amendments, in substance they are forward-looking and will be of some benefit to people across the country, as distinct from those few people who may benefit from the labour adjustments clause of the bill.

There is something in the Labour Code amendments, not to mention the rest of the bill, which spells out a double standard that many of us find very upsetting—one law for the employee and one law for the employer. The specified powers of the board make it very clear that the government agency will have the power to snoop into the records of companies to find out the details of the lives of employees as they affect their work record and their eligibility for benefits.

But, when it comes to the question of joint committees, charged with the responsibility of developing adjustment programs to mitigate the effect of terminations, to reduce the number of terminations or perhaps to cancel terminations, they are expressly denied the authority or power to obtain the facts. In other words, they are being told to go out and do a job, but they are not given the tools with which to do it. That is manifestly stupid.

Clause 32 refers to Section 60 of the original act. It reads:

60.13(3) A joint planning committee may not

(a) review the decision of the employer to terminate the employment of the redundant employees; or

(b) delay the termination of employment of the redundant employees.

This was struck out in committee, for which we are all thankful. In order to take advantage of having eliminated the restriction on what joint committees could do, we expanded the object of a joint planning committee to indicate that it was its object:

—to develop an adjustment program to eliminate the necessity for the termination of employment or to minimize the impact of such termination on redundant employees and to assist those employees in obtaining other employment.

In some senses it was a very new and revolutionary concept. All parties within the committee—perhaps there were one or two individuals who objected to the change—agreed with the change and with this new concept in Canadian law.

The vote of a few minutes ago rejected an amendment which would allow joint committees access to information to develop adjustment programs in a realistic manner. We are leaving them to operate in the dark. Much has been said in the House from time to time about freedom of information. Again the double standard; apparently it is all right to have freedom of information with respect to the actions of the public sector and of government, but when it comes to the actions of the private corporate sector, which decisions have gross impact upon thousands if not hundreds of thousands of Canadians, there is no freedom of information. That is interference with free enterprise; "—the enterprise which really matters—" as I think one poet called it at one time.

If we want to let the sunshine into government decisions, why do we refuse to allow the sunshine into the dark corporate boardrooms where decisions are made, which result in the termination and the wrecking of lives of thousands of people? How do we justify that? Surely we have reached a point in the development of society and a modern economy where it is not too much to expect that representatives of employees, of governments and of communities, whether civic, regional or whatever, should be able to obtain information to allow them to fulfil their responsibilities to their various electorates.

• (1740)

The divine right of kings that still exists in the corporate sector has been allowed to go on for much too long. We seem to pretend that what they do is just part of some grand imperial design, that it really does not matter when it comes to laws, and that we should not have anything to say nor be able to do anything about it. Surely that day is over, Mr. Speaker. Surely the minister and other members of the committee, in fact, all other members of the House if they think about it and give it some consideration, would realize that that day is over. Just as the divine right of kings has been taken away, the divine right of corporate kings should also end, especially when their decisions have such horrific effect on so many people.

Once upon a time private employers in small communities had a sense of social responsibility. Many small private employers in small communities still show that social responsibility. But the multinational conglomerates, whose head offices are God knows where, do not have any of that kind of social responsibility that comes with living and working in a community with real people as neighbours. Surely it is about time that this government—that any government worthy of its name believing in democracy—recognized that, through some kind of institutionalization, through some reform in law, through the opening up of avenues of information, must begin to make up for that important socioeconomic change that has taken place over the last number of decades. We have to bring back some measure of social and community responsibility to the corporate sector.

There are problems in accountability when it comes to government. We all recognize that. As socialists, we perhaps feel the need to develop real accountability within public sector corporations more than others. But that responsibility still has to be instilled in both the private sector and the corporate sector, which is still the dominant force in this society making most of the decisions which affect people, whether for good or for evil.

I was stunned by the result of a vote taken in the House not long ago. The official opposition voted against each and every one of the four amendments which this party put forward, including the first motion that was put. What they did was totally contrary to the position which that party took in