

Employment Support Bill

Seventh, the government should give serious consideration to embarking upon a real selling effort for Canada and a policy which would result in new trade patterns and alignments with other countries in the world. We should not look at just the dark side of this picture, we should look at the bright side as well. While the immediate situation Canada is facing is very serious and has very serious consequences, the other side of the coin does present Canada with an opportunity to bring about the type of re-alignment of its trade patterns which has been advocated by many people in Canada for many years, but in respect of which the government has done very little.

Thus, I think the general view of the NDP on the bill is that it is inadequate, but we will have to wait to see what results will be obtained. We feel it really does not represent an answer to the problems facing Canadians at the present time. The manner in which the bill has been drafted might cause one to say that the proper title should be the corporate welfare assistance act rather than the Employment Support Act. That would be a much more suitable title for this bill.

We have already expressed our disappointment that this bill is going to apply only to manufacturing industries. We recognize there are very real problems facing some manufacturing industries in Canada, and in particular many of the people who are employed in these industries, but we feel there are other problem areas in Canada. This is why I want to return to a discussion of the position and the problems of agriculture and fishing. We moved a motion during the report stage which would have adopted the principle of including agriculture and fishing within the framework of this legislation in so far as that might do any good, but this was ruled out of order. At this moment I am not taking issue with the ruling, but this was the purpose we had in mind. We wanted to see some action taken to help the farmers and fishermen under present circumstances.

When we look at this matter, we have to keep in mind what is happening to farmers and fishermen in this situation. The government's own analysis provides some information on this aspect. This analysis, which was published some time ago, shows that animal and vegetable products, as one of the group of exports to the United States, are more affected by the measures announced by President Nixon than any other sector of the Canadian economy. Some 63.5 per cent of exports of animal and vegetable products to the United States, using 1970 as a basis, are subject to the import surcharge. This compares to 24.8 per cent of the over-all exports from Canada to the United States. This 63.5 per cent is higher than the figure for any other sector outlined by the government. There are some individual or groups of commodities in respect of which there is a higher figure, but in terms of a sector analysis, animal and vegetable products, which include both agriculture and fisheries products, are more severely affected than any other group of products.

What has the government's response been to this? When the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) spoke during the debate on second reading he said the government was going to use the Agriculture Stabilization Act; they were going to conduct a commodity by commodity review and then take action wherever it was needed. What action have we seen from the government? All we have had from

the government has been some inane answers in which the government suggests it is still looking at the situation and trying to decide what to do. In fact, one of the most recent questions was asked by my colleague, the hon. member for Saskatoon-Biggar (Mr. Gleave), last Friday. He asked the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) the following question:

In view of the statement to the House by the Minister of Agriculture that the effect of the surcharge on agriculture would be handled commodity by commodity, is there under way a study commodity by commodity of how the surcharge is affecting Canadian agricultural production, and may we be advised very soon in the House of what the policy will be and how these specific instances will be taken care of.

• (4:30 p.m.)

Then, the Minister of Agriculture answered:

Yes to the first part of the question, and as soon as possible to the second part.

That seems to be the old refrain we hear from Liberal cabinet ministers whenever it comes to doing anything about agriculture or the problems of the farmers. When it comes to the problems of some other industries in Canada, where admittedly problems do exist, they come up with policies, however inadequate they may be. When it comes to farming or fishing, however, all they can say is that they are conducting a commodity by commodity review and that they will come up with a policy as soon as possible. That is the old refrain the farmers have been hearing and they are becoming tired of it. I am sure that even the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Mahoney) may be beginning to understand that some people in western Canada are getting cynical when they continue to receive this answer week after week and month after month. A great deal of concern has been expressed on this matter by farmers and also by the fishermen.

One example of the concern is expressed in a letter addressed to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) by Mr. E. K. Turner, President of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. This letter was sent to the Prime Minister on or about September 9, and in it Mr. Turner stated that Canadian farmers deserved financial compensation for injury resulting from recent United States economic policies.

In his letter to the Prime Minister the President of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool also noted that Parliament has under consideration legislation to take care of the expected build-up in the numbers of unemployed in Canada as a result of international developments. Then, he pointed out the fact that animal and vegetable products which comprise some 15 per cent of exports from Canada to the United States, using the 1970 figure again, would be subject to the United States import surcharge. He stated that the amount involved is some \$422 million which is 15 per cent of the total value of our exports. Therefore he suggested, on the basis of the government making \$80 million available as compensation for the adverse affects on Canadian industry of the import surcharge imposed by the United States, that certainly there was a case for ensuring that some \$12 million or 15 per cent of the \$80 million be made available to farmers and fishermen to compensate them for the added difficulty they face in an already difficult situation.