

Employment Tax Credit Act

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Chairman, from my point of view having anyone out of a job is unacceptable. I will try to do my best to deal with it, but in the realistic parameters that we have we are working under a number of limitations. But that is the ultimate objective, if you like taking into account all of the slippages, and also the fact that some people just do not want to work. But we will tackle unemployment with all the tools that are available to us in the best way we think.

There are major changes going on in the economic structure of Canada. We have to look at those, and simply to scoff at them, as some members are apt to do, I think is simply showing a know-nothing attitude. We have to look at how conditions change in this country, how we can respond to those changes and how we can use our resources most effectively.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: I want to indicate to the hon. member for Brampton-Georgetown that the Chair is well aware that he has been patient in waiting for his turn. But there is a requirement to keep some proportion on both sides of the House, so I will recognize next the hon. member for Eglinton-Lawrence and following him the hon. member for Brampton-Georgetown.

Mr. de Corneille: Mr. Chairman, in case we have forgotten our purpose here or what the subject is of this debate, I rise to speak on behalf of the speedy and merciful passage of the bill to amend the Employment Tax Credit Act, which is Bill C-19.

It seems to me that it goes without saying that I should support this bill. I am deeply concerned that this piece of legislation should be passed and passed urgently. It seems to me that we are trying to get under way a program that needs to be continued, and if we do not work and act quickly it will fall by the wayside and its momentum will be lost.

We understand also that this is not the only bill that will deal with unemployment. It is only one weapon in an arsenal of attempts to work with and overcome the problems that face those who are unemployed. It seems to me that if we have any compassion for those who are unemployed and if we really cared, we would not find it necessary to have 20 hours of debate, or more, of constant repetition.

An hon. Member: Why don't you sit down, then?

Mr. de Corneille: We would not find it necessary to talk about something that has already been tested and used, and whose value has already been realized. To understand what has happened in the past, we see also that it is a program to meet the small businessman's needs and help him fulfil his ability to make a contribution to the private sector, to the whole country and to its employment programs as well.

We see the opportunity here of giving the small businessman an opportunity to participate in the economy and also to help the unemployed. It seems to me that it is a method that has been approved as being one of the few methods which the Conservative party has recommended in terms of dealing with unemployment, because it is to stimulate the economy by stimulating business.

In that respect the principle seems to be good and accepted by all sides. However, if we accept that that is one tool, not the only method of approaching unemployment, and if we also realise the fact that there are many other programs which the Minister of Employment and Immigration has announced that this will be part of a wider package of programs, then we can see that there are other parts that we can look forward to if members do not want this program alone.

In the meantime, we have an urgent situation. If people are unemployed and in need of jobs, why does this House persist in debating something we all understand? A lot of people are wondering about this. People who are watching this debate on television and people who sit in the House know why this is Committee of the Whole and why the whole of Parliament is not here right now. They ask what is happening. Nothing is happening. That is why often all the benches are empty. There is a delay, if you will; there is obstruction in being able to bring forward legislation that deals with urgent needs. There has to be some concern of conscience on the part of all of those who have to think about people who are unemployed as to whether we are really dealing with these issues or toying and playing with them for political ends and purposes.

If we really cared, we would get on with the job. We would get on with the job by passing this particular piece of legislation. Using our committee on employment and immigration which exists for that purpose, we could discuss employment packages, or better packages if we have any. Then we could come back to seek amendments for additional bills when they come forward dealing with the problems at which they are aimed. This bill is not aimed at dealing with the whole unemployment problem of Canada; we all know that. We know that it is an urgent bill. It is a transitional one, to keep something going while we bring forward other legislation that would deal later with the total unemployment problem of Canada.

We inherited a situation where there were no funds to deal with these problems at the present time. We have to at least perpetuate what is there and keep it going because it is a good program. We should be able to assess its value. No program is perfect. No one program will solve all problems for all regions. The question is whether this Parliament intends in the next little while to help those urgently in need of that help, and to get a bill through to support a principle on which pretty well everyone has agreed.

Why is this bill being delayed? People who watch Parliament on television and who follow Parliament will realize that the vain repetition and idle discussion that is taking place is not contributing to the passage of this urgent bill. I feel that is true of other debates they are watching on television. I do not want to say that any one party is guilty. In fact, I am quite concerned that people may become disillusioned with the entire parliamentary system. Look at the debate yesterday. There are problems facing Canada in terms of unemployment, inflation, energy and national unity. What was the subject chosen for debate during the time of the House of Commons used as prime time by the opposition? It was apparently a very