

Employment Support Bill

duct the businesses of the nation, of which they know nothing, the fact of the matter is that these ministers can do very little until the number one man comes back to help give direction to a pretty misdirected group here in Ottawa.

The Minister of Finance and the genial Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce proceeded to Ottawa, full of injured ignorance and with the echoes of Joe Greene and his Denver gas speech ringing in their ears, and then went on a pilgrimage to Washington minus leader, minus plan and minus policy. However, all was not lost because the empty-handed—and some people think empty-headed—Minister of Finance came back to Ottawa and stated that Mr. Connally had given him a good hearing; that that great Texan who strides well and rides the horses free understood our problems north of the parallel and was going to listen to us. "In any event", said the minister, "we have a contingency plan that we will present to Parliament when it meets on September 7". In addition to that, the Prime Minister said that he would allow himself to take the time and effort to make what in effect was a state of the union address to the Canadian nation, setting out the federal government's objectives to preserve an economic balance, when parliament reassembles.

Mr. Paproski: And we are still waiting.

Mr. Nowlan: Yes, we are still waiting, as my hon. friend says. Because all we found on returning here was this Bill C-262, described as an employment support act and which is supposed to provide up to a maximum of \$80 million to help offset the 10 per cent surcharge proposed by President Nixon. This bill leaves agriculture, and any problems it may encounter, entirely up in the air since it is outside any problems that may be faced by manufacturing industry. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Olson) suggested in the House the other night that as far as the processing industries are concerned it might be administratively possible to give them some help, but with regard to any other agricultural products that may be affected by the surcharge we will have to reply upon the provisions of the Stabilization Act. Anyone who has had any experience with the administration of that act knows what a problem it is to try and obtain any recompense therefrom.

So the government's contingency plan was this Bill C-262, which contains 21 clauses, some of which are very invidious as I shall illustrate in a moment. The bill makes very little provision for agriculture, if any. I would suggest that the proverbial mountain laboured mightily to produce a mouse, and it was a mite of a mouse at that.

As far as I am concerned I do not primarily fault the government for Bill C-262 and its inadequacies. But I would refer the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce to the provision in clause 15 of the bill. Any parliamentarian or editorial writer or premier of a province who unilaterally declares that this is a good bill just has not read the bill, because clause 15 provides that even if an applicant is unable to comply with the regulations that are set up under the act, which we have not yet seen, he is not to worry; that he is to apply to the cabinet and he will get assistance anyway.

An hon. Member: Patronage.

[Mr. Nowlan.]

Mr. Nowlan: If that is not the case, then I should like the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce to say I am wrong.

Mr. Pepin: You are wrong.

Mr. Nowlan: Well, I am not going to digress and get into the rabbit tracks laid by the minister. Although he is a political scientist and taught something to someone at university, he is not a lawyer, and to me clause 15 suggests that where a manufacturer who makes application is unable to comply with the regulations of the board, he may go to the Governor General and a grant may be authorized. Has the minister himself read clause 15? Under clause 15, without any qualification whatsoever, manufacturers who have not complied with the regulations will be able to come to government and get assistance. This completely unqualified and arbitrary discretion on the part of the government and the cabinet, without terms of reference, flies in the face of parliamentary control. Except for the fact that this will help these companies unfortunately hurt by this surtax, this situation alone justifies criticism and complaint about this bill.

• (3:40 p.m.)

Let me now digress from the discussion of clause 15, although I hope to return to it again before concluding. The criticism of the faults in this bill goes far beyond its narrow purpose. This whole thing goes far beyond the question of the surcharge and the unemployment it might generate. To my way of thinking, the fundamental question refers basically to the economic relationships which do or should exist between Canada and the United States.

Mr. Pepin: Mr. Speaker, for the sake of keeping things clear would the hon. member again read clause 15 in order that he might realize immediately he is not giving a good interpretation of it.

Mr. Nowlan: I always like to oblige the minister, as he usually accommodates members of this House. Hopefully, at the conclusion of my more general remarks, I might refer again to the details of the bill, but I should like to conclude those remarks as my time is running short. I may suggest to the minister that clause 15 opens Pandora's box, and this is not good in a parliamentary way.

Mr. Pepin: I was only making the point that the hon. member is not giving a proper representation of the clause.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Annapolis Valley has the floor.

Mr. Nowlan: I suggest it is not the surtax, Bill C-262 or the inadequacy thereof, which is the fundamental issue here, but rather the basic relationships which exist or should exist between the United States and Canada. Certainly, this is true in an economic sense. We have to define our relationships in order that both nations can share the northern half of this continent.

We have been waiting for months for the Gray paper on foreign investment. I suggest it is still a blank paper and that this accurately reflects government policy on this matter. Perhaps instead of calling it a "Gray paper" on foreign investment it should be called the blank paper,