

Alleged Failure of Employment Policies

ers. This means that if a station is closed down, a worker can be transferred to another station, and within another two years that one can be closed down, too. The point at issue is the very important matter of the right of the working man in this country, regardless of whether he is a government employee or a private worker, to know something about his future. The point at issue is the government's refusal, even when it has information available to itself, to tell its employees what its management plans are.

Why, I ask, can the government not tell in advance the employees of the Department of National Defence at different stations across the country that the station will be closed down? Sure, there will be some political reactions, but let us face them. Let us have a discussion of whether a station should or should not be closed down. What we cannot do, and what the government should not tolerate, is the kind of practice which leaves the working man, so dependent on the power of others, uninformed about his future. Those of us who perhaps on the whole have superior education, and are in superior income positions, are not involved in this kind of threat to our future. We are in a position to better control it. We are lucky. The government however has an obligation to make its plans known in advance to those in less fortunate positions and it is failing to do so.

The last point I want to make about the government's attitude toward its own employees concerns its austerity program. Clear evidence is provided by a number of departments that what the government has done has been to force reclassification on people. In some cases it forces people to go down to a lower category or, if it wants to raise the incomes of certain officials, it effects lay-offs of others. The point is that this austerity program enforced by the government is implemented in a unilateral way by the departments, thus affecting very unjustly the employees involved. The question of reclassification is not negotiable. It is unilaterally imposed and it is the workers who suffer at the hands of officials who are given such arbitrary power by a government which is not basically concerned with what should be regarded as the ordinary rights of citizens and of working people everywhere.

I thank the House for giving me this extra time, and I will not go into more detailed comments on other government departments. Other members from this party will pick that up later in the debate. I hope I have said enough to make it clear that the government

[Mr. Broadbent.]

itself, instead of being an outstanding example of what an employer should be in this country, is setting a lamentably low standard.

This government, as I said at the outset, is led by a man who many of us thought had both moral and intellectual gifts of a high order. What I hope to have made clear is that if we consider the well-being of the average or poor Canadian, if we look at the government's general economic policy and at its manpower training programs, if we look at its attitude toward its own employees, we must conclude that we have a collection of men running this country who are committed simply to bureaucratic efficiency at whatever the cost, a collection of men quite indifferent to the legitimate aspirations of the vast majority of our people. I say therefore that the Prime Minister deserves to be condemned by all of those in our country who have any sense of moral justice.

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): I want to speak briefly on the motion introduced by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent). The motion reads:

That this House condemns the government (a) for its failure to provide a program of full employment,

And indeed, they should be condemned.

(b) for its discriminatory and ineffective manpower policies,

Here again, for the reasons outlined by the previous speaker, they should be condemned. and (c) for its destructive labour relations with its own employees.

I do not plan to go into detail in respect of all the different departments. Some of them have been mentioned by the previous speaker. If anyone had any doubts as to the relationship between the government and the employees of the government, all he has to do is think about the man who has great persuasive powers and who is always so friendly, courteous and kind to everyone, including the workers. I refer to the Minister of Communications (Mr. Kierans).

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): I hear applause from a displaced person across the way. Undoubtedly, he misunderstood my words. They were said with complete sarcasm and meant exactly the opposite. He does not have sense enough to understand it.

Mr. McBride: But you are never sarcastic.