

Canada Labour Code

The dilemma we face is trying to move people around from one economic area to another, and how best we can do this. Most important of all are the mechanisms by which we must attempt to find a job for the person who has been declared redundant. I think it is safe to say that one of the important issues in the recent rail strike which this House had to in part settle was that of job security for various classes of railway workers.

An understanding of the kind of process that is taking place, particularly in the secondary manufacturing sector, is associated with the concerns the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) has put forward. He has one way of looking at the problem and potential solutions, and I have another way of looking at the problem and the potential solutions.

● (1650)

Mr. Speaker, in the rural areas of Canada in particular from which the hon. member for Timiskaming and myself come, one of the things that has been happening has been a tremendous amount of capital investment going into traditionally labour-intensive industries. Mining and forestry, for example, no longer employ the same number of people, yet produce tremendous amounts of material, more than they ever used to. They are becoming capital-intensive industries.

When we have people who are made redundant because of that kind of transformation in our economic system, it seems to me we are looking at the provision of additional jobs in areas where those jobs were eliminated. Our aim is not only to provide unemployed person with the means of moving from one region of Canada to another where there might be jobs, but also of ensuring sufficient growth in those isolated areas in order to provide an expanding number of jobs for both the existing work force and the young people in those communities.

In the Atlantic provinces, I note that some progress is being made. This is evident from the latest statistics which have been published. This is an indication that perhaps after five years the policies followed by DREE are taking hold. So as I see the problem, it involves not just the question of legislating for severance pay through the Canada Labour Code, but it involves paying far more attention to the operation of a department like DREE, trying to find out what the mechanism is to bring some kind of economic growth to such isolated regions, and to re-examine the operations of the Department of Manpower and Immigration which in many cases has brought forward programs with which we are not satisfied. I and, I think, other hon. members feel that that department has not been able to find a way to accomplish the goals that we set for it in the legislation establishing the department.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Reid: The problem is that in many cases, when we have been able to define the goals that we want the departments to follow, we have not been able to find the mechanisms for achieving these goals. The programs of the Department of Manpower and Immigration, for example, taken by themselves, seem to be reasonable and sensible approaches to solving these problems. But in point of fact, in their actual operations and in the way in which the

department has been put together, they have not been successful; and certainly they have not been as successful as we all would have wished.

We are now faced with the ridiculous situation such as is indicated by the government's job survey, which indicates that there are a substantial number of jobs that are unfilled. Not only are they unfilled for short periods of time, but they are unfilled for lengthy periods. Manpower has not been able to find out about these jobs, take the lists of the unemployed from the Unemployment Insurance Commission and put the two together. I am not saying that unemployment would disappear if that were done. Obviously, the number of jobs available in any given period is going to decrease and they are not always going to be in the places where the unemployed are. A decrease in jobs is due, to a large extent to changes and to the process of turnover. But the point is that there does not seem to have been a realization on the part of Manpower that this problem exists, and even though there are mechanisms in place they do not seem to have worked out to the satisfaction of either the workers concerned, the department or the minister.

The hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) tells me not to blame public servants. I am not blaming public servants. I am saying that what we have done in the case of the Department of Manpower and Immigration is to develop a mechanism to do certain things. In large part it has not succeeded because we do not understand all we should about the operations of the job market, the economic systems and manpower mobility in terms of workers' preparedness to move from one community to another. We have not been able to cope with what have been called changes in the work ethic. Some jobs which used to be sought after, no longer are and we now have jobs which cannot be filled at any price.

It is not a matter of the public servants or a matter of the government; it is a question of looking at a changing society, trying to find out where that society is moving and attempting to devise policies on the fly that will meet the very real challenges that exist. To say that is not to blame anybody, but to point out that not only does the administration, the cabinet, the government, and the Liberal Party have a responsibility to attempt to make these judgments, but so do my friends opposite.

I realize what a strain it would be for the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton if he and his party had to put forward in the House reasoned, sensible policy proposals to meet these problems. One of the reasons they are sitting on the benches opposite and not over here is that they have no policies to offer on this or any other subject.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, just for the record, may I ask if it is still definite that on Monday we will be dealing with the foreign investment legislation?

Mr. Reid: That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hour set aside for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. The House will resume at two o'clock Monday afternoon.

At five o'clock the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.