

*Labour Adjustment Benefits*

tions are made from the middle range or lower-income base, we are at the lower edge of prudence, facing the poverty line.

The bill proposes another board, the Labour Adjustment Review Board, to certify that the lay-offs involve an establishment that belongs to a designated industry and affect 10 per cent of the manpower or 50 workers of the establishment, whichever is less; that the board is convinced the lay-offs stem from a serious upheaval in the industry; that the claimant is between 54 and 65 years of age, has exhausted all unemployment insurance benefits and has had at least 10 years' employment in the industry in the last 15 years—there is more—and that the claimant is a Canadian and has a Manpower certificate showing he has no employment opportunities or a much inferior job. If the board so certifies, the worker qualifies—that is, if the worker is still alive after jumping all those hurdles.

Can hon. members imagine the bureaucracy needed to sustain this operation? And then the cabinet in its political wisdom can simply identify industries in certain geographic locations where the program then applies.

An easier way with less bureaucratic and political involvement is to make the program applicable to all workers in the 54-65 age group who are the unwilling victims of permanent lay-offs and for whom there is no other employment opportunity.

In the Maritimes we have the spectacle of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) cutting the guts out of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia by cancelling over half of their rail passenger services and about 80 per cent of the CN Express operations, and none of the workers in these industries qualifies for this program. None of our woods workers, farmers, lumbermen, carpenters, plumbers or electricians qualifies. And yet every one of these laid-off workers can point to high interest rates or, in the case of the railways, to misguided government policies for their lay-offs. Do they meet the 10 per cent rule? They surely do. Unemployment in our primary industries exceeds 20 per cent, and in some of them it is more than 50 per cent. Have they worked in the industry for 10 of the last 15 years? Yes, but perhaps not for the same employer. Do they qualify? No. The industry is not designated, and neither is the geographic area. They should be. The bottom line is this: industries in all of the Atlantic provinces should be designated, the rules made more flexible for primary industries and all workers who qualify receive their benefits administered locally through community employment centres now in existence, without an expensive new board and a new bureaucracy.

What about spouses? We surely at long last are on our way to permitting their full participation in the Canada Pension Plan now that the equal rights amendment of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Clark) has been included in the Constitution. What about this program? Where do they fit here? It seems discriminatory, and it should not be. We should at long last admit that a spouse contributes greatly to the breadwinner's ability to earn income and is deserving of at least full survivorship benefits in this and, indeed, all our programs.

In its Part III amendments, the bill requires employers in federal jurisdictions to negotiate fair termination settlements with workers or unions. The minister in his speech on November 6 set out the federal jurisdiction to include railways, trucking, shipping, banking, grain handling and national infrastructure industries. One amendment reduces from five to one the required years of employment but a minimum of five is provided and a maximum of 40 removed. If more than 50 workers are laid off, 16 weeks' notice is required, and the employer must set up a management labour committee to minimize the impact of the lay-off on the workers.

The first disappointment in this movement—in the right direction—in the proposed amendments to Part III is the failure to recognize the equity of workers in their jobs. This recognition greatly strengthens the Japanese industrial empire in its successful drive to produce quality products at competitive world prices. It is a concept I hope the new minister will address.

The new threshold for severance pay of one year and the removal of the cap on it are good moves. The minimum of 50 required to trigger a 16 weeks' notice of lay-off is discriminatory against faithful long-term workers in small to moderate-sized plants and does not contemplate enlightened employers who, through no personal fault, are suddenly forced into bankruptcy by high interest rates or credit restrictions by our banks and are unable to give any reasonable notice. Is there anything to stop an unscrupulous employer from laying off 10 people at a time and defeating the purpose of this amendment?

Finally, the big disappointment is that the lack of federal leadership and initiative has resulted in no comparable provincial legislation. The new DREE disease of wanting to centralize control of projects and glory is apparently contagious. The result is equally predictable. All programs do not work well in every area and region. This program will operate only with railways, trucking, shipping, banking, grain handling, and national infrastructure industries. Again there is little benefit for the Maritimes because, thanks to the present government, we have little left in the way of national transportation companies and grain handling. We do have the banks—or better put, they have us. Our federal trades people are already the victims of discrimination, being paid regional rates below the national average.

Thanks, Mr. Minister, at least for your good intentions.

There is, however, something the government can do, that is, to set aside a portion of the income tax from firms and corporations to be held in trust and payable in lieu of severance pay and notice to all workers in the event of a lay-off, whether in groups of 50 or less.

The program before us is one of last resort and is no substitute for the program of job creation to which the minister referred in his opening remarks on November 6. I agree. What we really need is a blueprint for the economic recovery and development of our nation, and the training programs of which the minister also spoke are an essential measure that must progress in concert with development and job creation. In the Atlantic provinces, community colleges and technical