

Employment Support Bill

In other words, if the level is not specifically stated by the board, then the level specified in the bill must be followed. But there are some special circumstances that I think should be taken into consideration that could affect such a situation and I should like to draw to the hon. member's attention the possibility of seasonal factors in employment. Let us suppose that a company has been engaged in the manufacture of a seasonal commodity. One most obvious example is toys. Then let us suppose the board decides to specify some kind of employment level that would suit the particular period in question. The toy manufacturer might have a high level of employment during the summer or fall of the year, but in the spring the board would want to be able to specify a lower amount of employment which would be required under the act. This seems to me to be a reasonable flexibility which the hon. member has not taken into consideration.

• (8:10 p.m.)

There is another factor in respect of whether the board and the manufacturer should have some flexibility. I remind the hon. member of the possibility, which occurs frequently, where an industry might attempt to keep up levels of employment but be prevented from doing so because of a strike among the suppliers of raw materials. In such a case the board would want flexibility in allowing the manufacturer to adapt to such a situation.

I would also remind the hon. member that however much we may be anxious to maintain a fixed level of employment in a particular industry—and we have designed the act for that purpose—the world goes on and we cannot expect manufacturers to exist always in the status quo. It may be necessary for that manufacturer to implement technological changes in the plant. He cannot wait forever. He cannot wait perhaps for three months, six months or for a year—if the regulations were in effect that long—to make those changes. So there must be some flexibility to allow for changes in the manufacturer's world. We cannot expect him to live in yesterday's world, nor can we expect him to be efficient and productive if he has to live with yesterday's methods of manufacturing. So the board must have some opportunity to allow for that kind of flexibility.

The hon. member seems to be particularly concerned about the possibility that the manufacturer might make a profit as a result of the measures provided in this bill. It has been stated in committee and in the House, in connection with this bill, that the prime purpose is the maintenance of employment. But if in the process the manufacturer is able to maintain his profit level, this government does not shy away from that possibility.

I am sure the hon. member is well aware of elementary economics, the fact that if a manufacturer is to maintain employment in his industry he has to reinvest profits—and profits is the seed money that makes possible jobs in our society. This is particularly true of the kind of manufacturing industry with which we are concerned here. I am sure the hon. member is aware that the usual form of distribution of profits in a company is for the government to get the first 50 per cent and the second 50 per cent to be divided perhaps equally among the shareholders and for the replacement of equipment, modernization and the

improvement of the employment capability of the manufacturer.

This is the pattern of capital investment that we endorse and encourage. We hope it will go on, because without it the workers about whom the hon. member is so concerned, as we are, will not have the jobs that they need. We have to look at not just today but at tomorrow and the day after. So we do not shy away from the possibility of the manufacturer making profits, even though that may not be the principal objective of this bill. The principal measure is the direct maintenance of employment right now, but if in the long run we are able to foresee and to aid the development of employment in the future as a result of the maintenance of profits, which have been all too low in the last few months among manufacturing industries, then we do not shy away from that.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Broadbent: I should like to ask the hon. member how his comments bore specifically on the amendment that is currently before the House. It seems to me that he was discussing points that were raised in committee. How is the point of disclosure, which is the essence of the amendment before the House, affected in any way by the arguments the hon. member has now been advancing?

Mr. Howard (Okanagan Boundary): I was not dealing specifically with the matter of disclosure. That question will be handled in a moment by the minister.

Hon. Jean-Luc Pepin (Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce): Mr. Speaker, before I do so I should like to comment on another point which the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) made which, if I understood him correctly, would result in grants being paid only to Canadian-owned companies. I hope I am reflecting his views well: if not, I apologize and will allow my hon. friend to repeat his case.

Mr. Saltsman: He said we should know—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. This situation is very difficult for the Chair. The Chair was under the impression that the minister was seeking the floor to participate in the debate. The minister's participation has turned into a question directed to the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) who has already spoken in the debate and cannot speak again. The Chair allowed the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby to direct a question to the parliamentary secretary, but at this time I think the solution might be for the minister to take part in the debate, and if the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby has a question he may ask it of the minister.

Mr. Saltsman: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) permits me to respond to that question. In that way perhaps we will avoid some of the difficulty. I listened very carefully, and with a great deal of admiration, to the speech of the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby. What he was trying to say—and I think he said it