

*Government Orders*

longer capable of being a productive employee, a human resource that is no longer needed to revitalize the economy of Atlantic Canada.

Reformers believe that these early retirement packages should not be an option that we consider for workers in the prime of their life. Workers between the ages of 50 and 65 have accumulated a lifetime of knowledge and experience that should not be lost by putting them out to pasture. For half of their adult life they will be on some kind of a pension. Can we in good conscience make this kind of a move? All workers should be asked to participate in the other innovative options provided in the Atlantic groundfish strategy.

• (1240)

Let us think about what we are doing here. If we are going to put these valuable workers out to pasture, and I am not saying we should, the federal government already pays for a program to do just that. It is called social assistance.

If the government has given up on these workers and if the workers want to give up on themselves and go on welfare, that is the option that is available to them. Not only is it available it is cheaper than the 70:30 cost sharing proposed in this bill.

The Canada assistance plan provides financial support through the provinces on a 50:50 cost sharing arrangement, plus the bureaucracy is already in place in each of the provinces. There is no need to set up another bureaucracy to establish yet another glorified welfare program administered by the feds.

This duplication of effort is reason enough for Reformers not to support this bill. We came to Ottawa to eliminate duplication of effort and to save money. That is why we cannot go along with this.

Here is a program that is a complete duplication of effort between the federal and provincial bureaucracies and it costs the federal government even more money. Reformers say: "How about taking all the money spent in the administration of this earlier retirement program and put it in the hands of fishermen and fish plant workers to help them get back to work?"

All the other programs put forward in the Atlantic groundfish strategy have been designed to get fishermen and fish plant workers back to work, but the fish plant older worker adjustment program is designed to do the exact opposite. This early retirement package will act as a disincentive to re-enter the workforce, a disincentive to retrain, a disincentive to start a small business and a disincentive to move to find work. This is another reason why Reformers do not support Bill C-30.

Reformers do not have such a defeatist attitude that they give up on 1,200 workers before even trying to get them back in the labour force.

Another reason not to support this bill is the discriminatory aspects of it. This bill is discriminatory in three ways. First of all it is discriminatory on the basis of age. It is discriminatory on the basis of industry. It is discriminatory on the basis of region. This bill discriminates on the basis of age by providing benefits for older fish plant workers between the ages of 50 and 65. What about worker who is 49 and in the same situation as the 50 year older worker? Could he not challenge his ineligibility because it discriminates on the basis of age?

This early retirement program also discriminates against older workers facing similar hardship but not working in that particular industry or some of those fish plants.

What about those older workers who work in other service companies who are indirectly dependent on the fish plants and the fisheries? They were thrown out of work. What about the older workers who have been laid off in thousands of small industries and businesses in hundreds of communities in Atlantic Canada because of the fisheries crisis? Could these older workers not challenge this program because it discriminates against them on the basis of industry?

The fish plant older worker adjustment program also discriminates because it is targeted only to the Atlantic provinces. What about older workers in the rest of Canada who read about the special treatment of older workers in the Atlantic region? Could older workers in the rest of Canada who are also in serious financial straits not challenge this program because it is not available to them?

The Reform Party believes in true equality and is opposed to the discriminatory aspects of this bill, the fish plant older worker adjustment program. In fact Reformers are opposed to all older worker adjustment programs implemented by the government over the last number of years. The Reform Party principles would have programs apply to all laid off workers equally regardless of age, place of residence, industry and targeted to those most in need. Let us not forget that key point: target the programs to those most in need.

• (1245)

Finally, the Reform Party is opposed to the bill because of its defeatist approach to the east coast fishery. Neither Bill C-30 nor the Atlantic groundfish strategy describes how these programs relate to the total restructuring of the Atlantic fisheries so that it is sustainable once the recovery has taken place.

Reformers believe that the east coast fishery can be revitalized by fundamentally restructuring the industry so that it is