

Labour

around the amount. May I suggest that this is a backward approach. One should put the program in place to approach the problem and then set a figure to it.

I suppose the number of applications for this particular program will have to be divided by three, regardless of the need for the program.

A real surprise to me when I asked which Minister across the floor would be introducing this legislation was that it proved to be a man renowned as the ex-president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. The Minister was loud in his cry and lobbied very hard for the 1,200-plus municipalities of this country to have the Government introduce the "big fix", as it is called, which would produce 60,000 jobs in five years for young, middle aged and old people, and would bring the infrastructure of this country back into place.

I am sure he must have been saddened today when he introduced this legislation and compared it to what he previously talked about and espoused.

In 1984 the allotment was \$50 million. In 1989 it is \$42 million. This is obviously the antithesis of what should be in place. There is less money now and the population is ageing very quickly. In fact, the amount should be much greater.

We on this side of the House in the New Democratic Party agree with the principle of this bill. We encourage its speedy passage. We are very concerned that if we do not pass it quickly the Government might take it back, which would be very consistent with its actions as of late.

It is rather unfortunate that the senior population of this country basically has to beg for every crumb, every hand-out, and has to lobby very diligently. Indeed, it has become a very strong and effective lobby group with government. Let us get on with it. It is not exemplary or acceptable, but it is a great improvement over what we have.

Mr. David D. Stupich (Nanaimo—Cowichan): Mr. Speaker, in the northern part of my constituency some 40 years ago a major industry was closing down. One coal mine after another ceased operating, and there was great concern in that area about the economic future of the Nanaimo—Ladysmith—Chemainus part of the riding.

By good luck more than by planning, I would think, it happened that we had another resource, the forest resource, and a major pulp mill was opened up just as the last of the coal mines was closing. There was no program such as this available to the workers at that time, but fortunately the new industry took on older and younger workers alike. It had an almost insatiable appetite for workers. There was no problem getting a job when that pulp mill was open. Over the course of time, it built up into a plant that employed over 2,000 people. That is one of the pulp mills in the riding which I now represent. There is another pulp and paper mill, innumerable sawmills and many logging operations, all connected with the forest industry and all providing employment, which has been good.

• (1730)

However, in the course of the last 10 years, while the amount of product has been increasing—the log production has increased, the lumber production has increased, pulp and paper has increased—yet there has been an increase in lay-offs in the forest industry at all levels.

For example, I mentioned the Harmac Pulp Mill at Nanaimo, which together with the salt plant, employed over 2,100 people at one time. It is now getting along with approximately half that number of people and producing more product. But it was a gradual thing that happened over the last 10 plus years.

For example, a sawmill at Uboe that at one time employed approximately 1,000 people currently employs less than 20 per cent of that number. Yet the production of lumber has increased. This is a pattern that has developed all over the riding where there has not been a major lay-off, at least not major in terms of what is happening in Canada as a whole. When a sawmill in a community closes down totally, it is major for that community. Even if it only a partial lay-off, it is certainly major for the families involved in that particular lay-off.

That is where this legislation, as much as we welcome it, does not deal with the kind of problem that we have had in the past 10 years, particularly in Nanaimo—Cowichan. It would have dealt with the situation 40 years ago when the coal mines closed down in total, but it does not deal with a gradual loss of employment. It is not a major thing in terms of what has happened in Canada. It is