

*Employment and Immigration*

make work programs and having shared-work programs using UIC funds. There seemed to be a meeting of minds on that particular issue—opposing it.

It would have been of benefit to members of parliament to have had the view of the advisory council with regard to Bill C-27 and the effects envisaged by proponents and opponents of it. It would have been of benefit to have the input of that advisory council.

**Mr. Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand):** It might embarrass the minister.

**Mr. Rodriguez:** I agree. It would have embarrassed the bureaucrats. That is why the advisory council is shunted off to the side, treated like the ugly stepdaughter who is hidden from public view.

**Mr. Nystrom:** Chauvinist! It is the ugly stepson.

**Mr. Knowles (Norfolk-Haldimand):** Step-person!

**Mr. Rodriguez:** All right, ugly step-person. We have to put it in the correct context. When we asked in committee to see copies of the minutes and the agenda of the advisory council, I never saw more pussy-footing and dippy-doodling. There were glances back and forth along the wide wall of bureaucrats. We could not see the agenda or the minutes. We doubted whether they even existed. If these two motions will in any way enhance the role of the advisory council, so be it.

In committee we also asked about the possibility of local councils or regional councils which would have direct input to the minister. We were assured that the councils would have the ear of the minister and direct input. If they had direct input to the minister, members of parliament studying the legislation brought in by the minister should have the same evaluation reports, the same material presented to the minister with regard to unemployment insurance and, if this bill goes through, the new structure. One would hope to have that kind of information when studying government legislation.

Do the advisory councils, indeed, advise? If they do so advise, does that advice go directly to the minister and not via the bureaucracy which can phase out anything they do not want the minister to hear, and then pass on nice, bland statements to him? We have been trying to avoid that sort of thing, and if these two motions can get around that and make the advisory council meaningful and give it a role to play, we are in favour of it. We would much prefer to see the emphasis on the regional advisory councils rather than on a national advisory council. Why should everything in this country have to be centralized? Why should national bodies be mandatory, and regional bodies optional? Why does everything have to operate under a veil of secrecy? Why cannot the government be open in its approach to the way to administer programs in which members of parliament have participated in putting into law?

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

● (1210)

We in this party support the motions of the hon. member for Hamilton West and urge the government to accept those two motions and make them part of the legislation.

**Mr. Arnold Malone (Battle River):** Mr. Speaker, I think there is little of substance that can be said in relation to the amendments before us, but I think there are some examples which could be given to illustrate how dangerous it would be not to adopt the amendments put forward by the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander). Specifically stated, the hon. member's amendment reads:

The minister shall cause any reports related thereto to be laid before parliament within 30 days after the receipt thereof or, if parliament is not then sitting, on any of the first 30 days next thereafter that parliament is sitting.

All we are really asking the government to do in relation to Bill C-27 is to get out from under the criticism that this government has been under since its existence, and to give, as a right to the Canadian people, freedom of information. In other words, we take the view that what is happening in Canada today is that the government is taxing the citizens of our country, taking their money, conducting surveys and collecting information to use in research, and then turning around to the people and telling them they have no business to know anything about it.

What has happened is that the government has drifted away from the concept of government by the people, of the people and for the people that was enunciated by a democratic leader of another country. Today, what we really have was stated in the House of Commons in May, 1975, by the hon. member for Peace River (Mr. Baldwin). He said, "What we have today is government of the bureaucrats, by the bureaucrats and for the bureaucrats". That comes about because of the situation of a high degree of secrecy which takes place within our government institutions. This amendment would, in one piece of legislation, say that the kind of information gathered from the council of people that is important to Canada, to Canadians, in relation to manpower and immigration would be knowledge that is accessible and available not just to the government, not just to some council, but to the Canadian people who should have the right, whatever kinds of important pieces of knowledge are put forward, to know what that information is.

I think it is important to underscore that when we talk about freedom of information we are not necessarily saying that that needs to take place in all stratas or layers of government.

I think there is just reason that within the Department of National Defence or some of the sensitive areas of external relations with other countries the government, in its judgment and wisdom, ought to have the right to refrain from releasing certain bits of information that could endanger our national security. That is not the situation at the present time. I would like to put forward an example that happened in my old office on Parliament Hill this past year which I think shows the state of the shambles we are in in terms of lack of the government releasing information that ought to be available to the Canadian people.