

Employment Support Bill

Mr. Rose: The hon. member for Waterloo (Mr. Saltsman) made a suggestion, frivolous I am sure, about keeping the state out of the bedroom. I agree with him, but I do not think it is germane to the point I was making.

The hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River (Mr. Reid) proposed an amendment. I do not know whether he was in contact with the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, but apparently he was not. He suggested, as sort of a halfway measure, that rather than supporting an amendment calling for a disclosure every month it should be quarterly. That might have some merit. But when I was on the other side of the House the minister shook his head, indicating this suggestion was not acceptable. An hon. member of his own caucus proposed the amendment, and I am distressed by its reception because there is one thing I can say for the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River—he may be a Liberal but he is also Labour. If you look him up in the "Parliamentary Guide," that publication frivolously termed "the stud book" in parliamentary language, you will find he is known as the Liberal-Labour member. I think he has the best interests of labour at heart. Of course, his party tends to be historical, and often hysterical, but that member represents a constituency that has returned to this House since 1926 Members of Parliament who are not only Liberal but also Labour. His amendment was rejected and held in complete contempt by that smiling minister. He smiles even when he is unhappy, and I am sure he is unhappy about the length of the debate tonight.

I think the hon. member's best intentions were put forward in the form of this amendment, but he was repudiated by the government. In any event, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce seems to be willing to bulldoze this bill through no matter whether the taxpayer's money is protected.

Mr. Lessard (LaSalle): Oh, no.

Mr. Rose: I hear the chairman of the transport committee, that hon. member from Montreal. He is one of my—

Mr. Alexander:—"dear friends."

Mr. Rose: Yes, "dear friends."

Mr. Alexander: And highly respectable.

Mr. Rose: I am very fond of that particular chairman.

Mr. Alexander: But!

Mr. Rose: That hon. member and I have an association in common. Once upon a time I played trumpet in a night club. I was very surprised to learn that once upon a time that hon. member owned a night club. So we really do have something in common. Regardless of his interjection, the public has the right to know where its money is going.

The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) made four essential points. He asked for a declaration of the name of the recipient of each grant. What is wrong with that? I do not see why it is not important for the public to know who receives these grants. The hon. member wants to know whether there is a preponderance of U.S.-owned firms involved. To the average guy working at GM in Oshawa, or at RCA or GE in Montreal, who is

[Mr. Saltsman.]

about to lose his job because of the recent imposition of the U.S. surcharge, I do not think this matters a bit. It may make a big difference to the long-term benefit of Canadian society and our economy, but in terms of these grants I do not think it is too important who owns the firm. The point is that we should know who gets the money, and I think that is fair enough. I think the amount of each grant should be clearly identified.

As the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) suggested, we have already witnessed what can only be regarded as a frivolous waste of money by the Department of Regional Economic Expansion. People and firms which really do not need the money, receive it. Companies with all kinds of finances were lured into particular areas and given government largesse they really did not need. The government of Canada, as the donor of the grants, did not have any share in these firms in proportion to the grants given. In my opinion this is wrong. If a private firm received a grant, at least the people should obtain a kind of equity share for the amount given.

My colleague also asked for an indication of the production level at the beginning of the grant period and at the end of the crisis peak. He also asked for a statistical indication of the employment level at the beginning of the grant period as well as at the end. There would then be some indication of whether the \$80 million to be given to industry had an effect, or whether it was frivolously wasted in propping up some industries that were not going to amount to a great deal in terms of continuing employment.

In conclusion—this is usually where the applause comes—my colleague said there was a good reason for being rather careful about the disclosure if it should involve the security of the state. He agreed that in certain instances there was a need to be very circumspect about the disclosure if the security of the country was threatened. There is no security of the state, in the sense we usually think of it, involved in this amendment. The well-being of the state in the interests of all is thoroughly documented in Charles Wright's recent book "The Greening of America". We can excuse all kinds of inadequacies and injustices on the basis of the best interests of all, but there should be other safeguards.

In closing this part of the debate—at least I assume I am—I suggest to the minister, through you, Mr. Speaker, that we in this party are not calling upon him to be responsible for everything in terms of where these grants go. I do not mean the minister personally but, rather, the government. But I think nothing could be lost and a great deal of confidence could be gained on the part of the general public if the minister were prepared to accept the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Kenora-Rainy River, because I believe there is enough evidence to suggest from past practices of the government that government funds are not always used to the best advantage. Every Canadian, rich, poor or impoverished would have no real chance of benefiting from these grants although they contribute equally if not in terms of the amount paid, certainly in respect of the proportion of their income.

So there is really nothing wrong with this amendment and I appeal to the minister's smiling and Liberal conscience to stand up before us and say this is not a bad idea. If he cannot accept the amendment of my hon.