

*Labour*

I am glad that however long it has taken it, and however little is here, the Government has finally given birth to this amendment. It will see that those senior workers in various parts of the country and in various industries, at least up to 5,000 of them in a year will get some help. I hope it is the beginning of a stronger and larger commitment, and that we as a Parliament, representing all Parties, will begin to give a higher priority to those who have produced the wealth of this country, particularly in the more higher risk industries when dislocation or unemployment befalls them.

Back in the 1930s, Mr. Speaker, there was a song written about older workers who had been cast aside. I would just like to read it into the record:

They put horses to pasture, they feed them on hay,  
Even machines get retired some day.  
The bosses get pensions when their days are through,  
Fat pensions for them, brother, nothing for you  
Who will take care of you,  
How'll you get by  
When you're too old to work and too young to die?

That was written some 50 years ago. Unfortunately, it describes a situation that is still all too familiar to many workers, particularly in heavy industry and in those regions of Canada that are still suffering from serious and aggravated proportions of unemployment.

It is well past time that we get our priorities straight and ensure that we provide decent retirement incomes at an appropriate age. Even Italy, in high risk industries has caught up and surpassed us immeasurably in the last few years, because people in heavy and high risk industries are able automatically to go on pensions at age 55. They do not have to wait for a closure or a lay-off. Their society has recognized that heavy industry takes its toll. We ought to begin realizing that too.

It is with some measure of satisfaction that I at least see a few more colleagues in this House of Commons who have spent a good part of their lifetime in heavy industry. When I was here previously I believe that there were two of us. Now I think we have been multiplied at least threefold or fourfold but it is still less than a dozen.

Perhaps we may over the next few months be able to implant some sense of urgency, some sense of priority to those people who spend so much of their working lives behind gates or behind barbed wire, who are not seen by

the public and whose problems are not recognized by the public because of that.

If you are a retail clerk, or a bank teller, or a teacher, people tend to see you where you work. They can identify a little bit with your problems. For industrial workers, that is not the way it is. It is industrial workers who are being increasingly laid off and cast aside as we go through the various dislocations that our economy is undergoing.

I am glad that the Government has laboured, even if it has only produced a mouse. It is a welcome mouse and we will support it.

**Mr. Robert D. Nault (Kenora—Rainy River):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today at this late date to address the legislation before this House, that is, Bill C-8, an Act to amend the Department of Labour Act, as it relates to the program for older worker adjustment.

We on this side of the House have been waiting for this Bill for a long time. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) announced this program in February of 1986. It has taken this Government over three years to get this piece of legislation before the House. In the early 1970s, the Liberal Government recognized the need for policies which would protect older workers facing lay-offs in designated industries. In 1982, all policies affecting older workers were amalgamated and the Labour Adjustment Benefits Act was passed.

• (1820)

When the Conservative Government announced its intention to create a new program for older worker adjustment in February 1986, it put an end to the old LAB Program. Older workers in this country have been waiting for over three years for this new program and many have suffered undue hardships as a result of delays in getting this legislation before the House.

The Government is increasingly dependent upon the provinces. We have seen program after program shifted to the provinces. The program for older worker adjustments is no different. In fact, this program is contingent on the province's participation. This is of great concern to me, given that agreements have not yet been signed with the Provinces of Ontario and British Columbia.

There are several questions which need to be answered. At what stage are the negotiations with these two provinces? Is there a reluctance on the part of Ontario and British Columbia to participate and, if so,