

Employment Support Bill

mind the disorganization and the incapacity of this government to deal with its legislative program, its utter incompetence and failure to bring forward matters which are so urgently required, I think I am entitled to be a pessimist about it. If the government House leader or anyone in authority on the government side would stand up and say that this matter will be brought up for consideration, I am quite sure that on this side of the House—certainly speaking for this party—we would be prepared to agree to exceedingly limited debate. I hope that my friends on my left, who are equally involved in this particular issue, are prepared to see a scrutiny committee established.

If we had a reasonable hope of getting a scrutiny committee sometime before the session is over, I would go along with the hon. member. But I am just not able to thrust this government, surprising as the statement may sound coming from me. Within the twenty minutes which are allowed to me I would not be able to chronicle even one twentieth of all the reasons that I cannot trust this government—

Mr. Pepin: Disperse.

Mr. Baldwin: It is sufficient on this issue to say that the failure of the government, despite the pressing which they have had from this side, despite the requests, the pleas and almost the prayers, to get this scrutiny committee established, is evident. If we had that committee, the motion of the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert), a very good motion, would not be necessary.

So I say to my friend that I accept what he says in principle, but as to ways and means, if he were honest he would say to me that he, too, has very grave doubts about when this particular committee will be established. It has been a long, tortuous process stretching back into years of trying to bring ourselves up to date with other modern legislative assemblies and secure some means of dealing with the very sort of thing which the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) proposes. This, I think, makes us sit very low on the totem pole so far as issues of this kind are concerned. Perhaps before this debate is over the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) may speak on the matter. I am not blaming him for not being here today. If I were sitting in the cabinet I would stay away from my place also, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Baldwin: To be part of a law breaking team must break the heart of the Minister of Justice. I am sure that this must concern him, and this is one of the reasons he is not here today. But if before the debate is concluded, the Minister of Justice were to stand up in his place and say "I give my undertaking on behalf of the government that the debate on item No. 96 to establish a scrutiny committee will be commenced, with a reasonable undertaking from the opposition that debating time would be limited to a speech from each party", I think that would be acceptable. The committee would then be established before this debate has been completed and we would rest a lot easier. The very valid reason offered by the hon. member for Edmonton West would then be dissolved.

[Mr. Baldwin.]

Before I leave this particular aspect, I should like to say also that I disagree with the suggestion that these Orders in Council should be the subject of a negative resolution rather than an affirmative resolution. The problems which face the opposition and this Parliament of securing an opportunity, a time and a place to debate, place too great a handicap upon us and, hopefully, any member on the government side who might be prepared to stiffen his backbone and say that he does not like what is being done, so is prepared to demand that this particular issue come forward by an affirmative resolution.

There is an obvious difficulty—and I made this case at the time we were debating the government organization bill C-207—which faces an opposition party and a private member in securing the ways and means in the House to debate a negative resolution. Do we have to wait until we have an opposition day? Do we have to put it in the form of a private member's motion? I do not need to illustrate to Your Honour the many pitfalls and difficulties which face us. If, on the other hand, the government cannot secure the implementation of its order in council until it is approved by an affirmative resolution, then the minister and hon. members on his side will be vigilant, alert and very prompt in bringing the order in council before Parliament and securing its approval. I am sure that is what prompted the hon. member for Edmonton West to suggest an affirmative resolution. For these reasons—and there are many others but I will limit myself to these two since the others have been well expressed by the mover of the motion and other hon. members—I say we should support the amendment.

There is another aspect, however, and that is the opportunities which this motion would provide for securing a greater degree of knowledge as to the basis behind the particular order in council which the government might see fit to bring forward. From time to time I have described this government as a very secretive government which hides behind orders in council and behind its refusal to come into the House and answer honestly, faithfully and truthfully questions which are asked. We have had an example of that today. Every day in the House my friend, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) and other members of this party have pressed the minister and the Prime Minister on the particular issue of the situation of Canadian trade with the United States. We have received non-answers. We have been told that there are various contingency plans which this government has and that if the situation arises they will produce them like a rabbit out of a hat. They will tell us what they will do at the appropriate time but we should be good boys for the time being, and there is no reason why they should tell us what they are going to do or what plans they have afoot. This causes some of us to suspect that they do not have any plans afoot and they do not know what they are doing. I may be wrong. I admire the smiling amiability of the minister, although I am afraid I must limit my admiration to that. However, that is a great gift. If any member of this government can smile at the present time, it is a tremendous thing. But it is this refusal to give us facts and information with regard to the particular problem which makes it so essential for the motion proposed by the hon. member for Edmonton West to be accepted.