

Labour Adjustment Benefits

because labour adjustment benefits are at present being paid to a few textile and clothing workers and to footwear and tanning workers under separate regulations. According to the Department of Labour, the base figure for the number of people receiving benefits under these two programs is 500, less the number of new people who will be receiving benefits under the program in 1982, the figure will be 350. This is in a society where there are 1,096,000 unemployed and where lay-offs are taking place at the rate of 3,000 per day—350 individuals 54 years of age and older will receive benefits from the program. It seems absolutely ridiculous that the government would embarrass itself by bringing forward such a piece of legislation. It must be an embarrassment to the government. Furthermore, the benefits under the present programs for textile and clothing workers and for footwear and tanning workers are 66 per cent, whereas under the new legislation they will be 60 per cent. Even these workers will receive less.

Not only are the numbers extremely tiny of those who will benefit from the program, but there will not be any of them in British Columbia because the act is quite explicit that an industry may be designated only if it is undergoing significant economic adjustment of a non-cyclical nature—and presumably this would not affect the major industry of British Columbia—or by reason of import competition or industrial restructuring implemented pursuant to a policy or program of the Government of Canada. That is to say, the Government of Canada has already to have initiated some program to assist in industrial restructuring. Since there is no Government of Canada program which affects the British Columbia lumber industry, no one in British Columbia 54 years of age and over and involved in that industry will benefit from the program should it be enlarged in numbers. When only 350 will receive benefits, it is almost too silly to talk about. In any event, should the numbers be enlarged, no one in British Columbia, the way it is presently worded, will benefit from the program. Furthermore, women will not benefit from the program. This is one of its great inequities. It is no wonder that “he” is referred to throughout. As I read it, very few women will benefit.

For example, one is required to have been in an industry for ten of the previous 15 years in order to qualify. This is very unlikely for large numbers of women. Furthermore, one is required to have worked 1,000 hours in every one of the years. This knocks out immediately a woman who has taken off some time to have a child. I do not think the government even thinks or realizes that 40 per cent of the work force is women and that over half of them are women with children. It does not even realize that they are in the economy and of course are suffering as much as men from unemployment.

Mr. Berger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Miss Jewett: I will be glad to accept a question at the end of my remarks. The government does not realize that women are suffering as much from unemployment, particularly if we take into consideration the number of hidden unemployed. The bill barely touches upon women in the labour force.

My colleagues have and will continue to enumerate further serious limitations in the bill, but it would seem to me that if the government were really serious about the increasing number of lay-offs, it would extend the bill far more broadly than what I estimate to be the 350 laid-off people it will cover this year. Also it would make the regulations sufficiently flexible, particularly on the 1,000 hour regulation, so that women will at least be eligible. Also it would take a serious look at the resource sector—particularly the forest industry in British Columbia and elsewhere—which has not had the benefit of any special government planning. It would look at the 30 per cent unemployment rate there and at the incredibly high number of lay-offs, and would adapt the bill to suit other parts of the country and other sectors of the economy. If the government does not do something along these lines, the bill will remain what it is at this very moment—not even a band-aid but a laughingstock. That is how it strikes those of us in this corner, and that is how it will strike all Canadians who learn about it.

● (2020)

Mr. Berger: Mr. Speaker, will the hon. lady entertain a question?

Miss Jewett: Certainly.

Mr. Berger: Mr. Speaker, in examining the bill we find it provides benefits for persons aged 54 who have worked 1,000 hours—

Miss Jewett: Every year.

Mr. Berger:—in ten out of the past 15 years. The hon. member indicated, and I would note, that 1,000 hours a year, I believe, is five months and that this would disqualify many women who might have had to leave the labour force in order to give birth. How many women does the hon. member know who give birth after the age of 45?

Miss Jewett: Mr. Speaker, that is a pretty silly question, but the answer is quite a few.

Hon. David Crombie (Rosedale): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate being able to speak at report stage of this bill. It gives me an opportunity to deal with some of the matters that were dealt with in committee. It might be useful if I tried to focus for a moment on the philosophy of the bill. From the many speeches that I have heard from the far end of the House one would have thought that what was being dealt with here was a large bill dealing with industrial strategy.

Mr. Orlikow: That is what we need.

Mr. Crombie: It may well be what the hon. member says we need, but there are certain specifics that can be done for people who are disturbed as a consequence of economic dislocation. This bill helps them do that.

In the Dodge report that dealt with labour markets in the 1980s there is a rather significant statement. I think it is worth