

Labour Adjustment Benefits

application is processed by a board of five people. Some of the criteria applied to their application will be, for example, whether they were laid off from a designated industry and whether the work force was reduced by 10 per cent or 50 employees. That is the task of the board, Mr. Speaker. It seems elementary. Why do we need a board to decide whether people have been laid off in designated industries? Contrary to the hopes of the NDP, the designation will not be made by the board; it will be made by order in council on the basis of political considerations. Why do we need a board to decide whether or not the work force has been reduced by 10 per cent or 50 employees in a designated industry or region? It makes no sense.

● (1700)

Once the board has judged upon applications by employees, it will decide whether or not they shall have leave to submit applications. I have been to the Soviet Union, and that is the way it works there—every bureaucrat is backchecked by another bureaucrat; every board is backchecked by another board; one must obtain permission in order to apply for benefits which the government allows. Bill C-78 is advocating that employees must first go before the Labour Adjustment Review Board. If they have the stamina and the patience to wade through mounds of paper, applications and criteria then the board might give them leave to apply for permission to receive benefits from the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission. Then, of course, they must submit other applications, after all this bureaucratic rigmarole, to the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.

Now, what does the commission want to determine? First, it wants to determine whether an employee is a Canadian citizen; that should take approximately 30 seconds. Then it wants to know whether he or she is less than 54 years of age but not more than age 64; that should take another 30 seconds. It wants to know whether or not the employee has exhausted his or her UIC benefits; the office and the records are there, so it should take about 10 minutes. Then it must determine whether or not there are prospects for alternative employment. At that point, 50-plus-year-old men and women are sent down to line up and apply for other jobs. This is the illusion of the entire program. In fact there is a paltry \$10 million maximum to help some 1,000 senior employees at the most. The greatest number of applicants, after going through this rigmarole and applying to the commission, will be sent to line up and file applications for employment. If the commission cannot decide on the relative merits of a particular application, the bill provides that it can be referred to a board of referees.

As well, in the amendments to the Canada Labour Code the bill provides for the establishment of a joint planning committee to analyse the criteria under which the adjustment program should be initiated, and how many and what type of employees should benefit. Thus there will be four separate boards, bodies and commissions involved in spending \$10 million. My estimate is that a good third of this amount will be spent on paper work and bureaucracy. It will be a further waste of taxation resources that can only be earned by the

production of products which the country can sell and the people need. Bureaucracies, boards and commissions handing out government money and taking productive people out of the work force run totally contrary to what we are trying to achieve in the country.

I should like to refer to a couple of inventories of recent applications for unemployment insurance. In 1981, in my riding applications for unemployment insurance benefits rose from 7,900 to 8,900, or a total of 1,000. In the last month alone, the Employment and Immigration Commission office staff in my riding had to work overtime and on weekends. Approximately 30 additional staff members were required because unemployment insurance applications rose from 1,100 in January, 1981, to 1,400 in January, 1982. Also I should point out that applications rose from 1,200 in December, 1980, to 1,600 in December, 1981. The proposed legislation does little to solve the escalation of unemployment, caused primarily by the policies of government. There have been over 2,000 lay-offs in the mining industry since the November 12 budget, and we expect another 5,600 by the beginning of summer, for a total of 8,000 mine workers being laid off permanently or taking early retirement. In many cases they do not want to go on early retirement because it is contrary to their sense of dignity; they want to work. What is the point of going on early retirement in a community such as Sudbury? What can one do? Why are we letting young people sit around drawing unemployment insurance benefits? Why are we not retraining them, upgrading their skills and redirecting them into new and challenging forms of employment? Instead the government talks about removing the most productive segment of the work force. I cannot understand it. It is a condemnation of government that all it comes up with is alphabet soup gimmicks as solutions to very grave and serious problems confronting the nation.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Algoma (Mr. Foster)—Communications—Reception of television signals from CanCom satellite; the hon. member for Peterborough (Mr. Domm)—Metric Conversion—(a) Forced implementation. (b) Prime Minister's views; the hon. member for Central Nova (Mr. MacKay)—Airports—Calling of tenders for advertising concession.