

Regional Development Incentives Act

Mr. G. H. Aiken (for Mr. Macdonald, Egmont) moved:

That Bill C-202, an act to provide incentives for the development of productive employment opportunities in regions of Canada determined to require special measures to facilitate economic expansion and social adjustment, be amended by inserting in clause 13 thereof, next following subclause (1), the following subclause:

"(2) in keeping with the spirit and intent of this act, the minister shall have regard to increasing productive employment opportunities for persons local to the designated region and, to this end, shall whenever possible encourage and promote the recruitment, training and employment of such persons by the applicant."

He said: Mr. Speaker, it may be that the minister is prepared to accept this amendment because it is very much in keeping with the spirit of the bill and in my opinion is an excellent amendment.

The purpose of the bill is to provide a stimulus to the economy of certain areas where it is needed. The purpose of the amendment is to encourage the employment of local labour by new industry which comes into an area and to express a legislative intention to that effect. As was said by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) last night, we in this party are more concerned about the effects of a new industry upon an area and its people rather than about the industry itself. In that light we approve of the principle of the bill.

The amendment does not lay down specific requirements as to how many people should be employed or what the percentage should be, but it does give direction to the minister, his officials and industries as to the concern of parliament that the areas involved actually receive the benefits. Until now most new industries established in designated areas have been quite reasonable in connection with the employment of local labour. We realize that a new industry must bring key people with it in order to operate a special factory or process because they have knowledge that local people do not, but we believe it would be very helpful if there were an express statement by parliament that local labour should be used to the fullest extent possible. I therefore hope the minister will see fit to accept the amendment.

● (12:40 p.m.)

Mr. Arnold Peters (Timiskaming): Mr. Speaker, if this bill is to fulfil its purpose of providing employment opportunities in designated areas, the minister should be able to accept the amendment without much difficulty. We recently had in my area the experience of \$40 million worth of work being

carried out by Ontario Hydro, yet the employment situation in the area was not much improved. There are a number of reasons for this. One is the competitive factor which affects contractors who employ certain classes of workers. Ontario Hydro has in its master contract a clause which provides that wherever possible people will be employed from the local unemployment insurance area. This provision has been of great advantage in giving the people the opportunity to apply for jobs in the normal manner with some hope of success.

Difficulty often arises because several unions are involved in projects. I believe the minister should find a solution to the problem of employing local people when unions are involved and the area concerned is far removed from urban areas. It is often almost impossible for local people to get a job because outsiders are brought in to do the work. I believe this is a very important clause. We have been very interested in federal employment practices. Projects have been started in areas which have large native populations. I refer to the Northwest Territories, where little consideration has been given to employing local Indians and Eskimos. If an employer wishes to establish a business in such an area, he should be obliged to employ local people even if it is necessary to train them.

Many industrial complexes which may be established as a result of this bill will, of course, find it necessary to import skilled personnel. I think everyone will agree that in some cases this is a necessity. But I believe the degree to which this is done can be limited and controlled so that there are job opportunities for the greatest number of local people.

This has been a very complex problem when dealing with people who must be trained. I should like to give an example. The contractor on the Ontario Hydro project may need truck drivers. The truck drivers in the local area may have been used to driving trucks with a capacity of up to ten tons, and the trucks used on the project may be very much bigger. Unless local people are trained to carry out these jobs they may not have the opportunity to work. Restrictions may be applied by the employer which make it very difficult for local people to be employed.

The former minister of northern affairs was well aware of this problem. He did not go so far as to have a provision written into master contracts covering all government projects in the Northwest Territories, but on specific