

Motions Nos. 13 and 14 should be grouped for debate but voted on separately.

Motions Nos. 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 should be debated and voted on separately.

Motions Nos. 20 and 21 should be grouped for debate but voted on separately.

Motions Nos. 22 and 23 should be debated and voted on separately.

I think it might be a courtesy to hon. members if at eight o'clock this evening the Table had an adequate supply of copies of this ruling for hon. members to have in hand.

Pursuant to the suggestion of the hon. member, I will call it six o'clock. Accordingly, I do now leave the chair until 8 p.m.

At 6.01 p.m. the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: When the House rose at 6 p.m. this evening, the hon. member for New Westminster-Coquitlam (Miss Jewett) had the floor.

[*English*]

Miss Jewett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are debating Bill C-78 which is an act to provide for the payment of benefits to laid-off employees and to amend the Canada Labour Code. It sounds pretty good, particularly the first part—an act to provide for the payment of benefits to laid-off employees. Yet when one looks at it closely one sees that this year it will benefit at the most, from my estimate, 350 and not 850 employees. This, in a society where, in January, 1982, 1,096,000 Canadians were unemployed, or 9.5 per cent of the labour force. If you add to that the hidden unemployed which in January, 1982, is estimated at 745,000, you will find that the number of unemployed constituted 15 per cent of the Canadian labour force. When you look at lay-offs—and I wonder if members of the government were really looking at lay-offs when they introduced a measure like this which is supposed to benefit those who are laid off—you will see that in 1978 there were 75,000 lay-offs and that since then the numbers have increased both in quantity and severity, until in 1980 there were 183,000 lay-offs. Then, between September, 1981, and January, 1982, the number increased to 277,000, and in the last month alone, December, 1981, to January, 1982, there were 89,000 lay-offs. That is about 3,000 lay-offs per day in this country.

In British Columbia the unemployment and lay-off situation is far more serious than I think the government realizes—perhaps because it has no members from that province. In January, 1982, the number of unemployed totalled 129,000 and the unadjusted unemployed rate was, therefore, 9.8 per cent, which is 0.3 per cent higher than the Canadian average.

Labour Adjustment Benefits

If one includes the 63,000 not included in the official figures, the unemployment rate in British Columbia jumped to 13.9 per cent, just below the national average of 15 per cent. The IWA estimates that in January, 1982, 30.6 per cent of its members in British Columbia were unemployed. This figure contrasts sharply with the IWA estimate for October, 1982, of 17.5 per cent. On the coast, 37.8 per cent of members are unemployed, and in the interior the figure is 17.8 per cent.

In terms of lay-offs, the situation is equally, if not even more, serious. In my constituency of New Westminster-Coquitlam, British Columbia Forest Products laid off over 250 employees. MacMillan Bloedel, in its Jardine division, laid off 80 employees in September, 60 of them indefinitely, while its sawmill division laid off 400 employees last year. Lamford Cedar also laid off 110 employees in September for an indefinite period of time. This is the magnitude of lay-offs in the one federal constituency of New Westminster-Coquitlam.

● (2010)

At the same time we find that the consumer price index increased to 14.3 per cent in 1981 in Vancouver, the highest increase of any urban area in Canada. In the more general situation, costs for non-food items such as housing, transportation and energy, have risen much higher than the average consumer price index. The average industrial wage in British Columbia has increased to 12.2 per cent, while the CPI increased to 15.5 per cent last year. As a result, workers have suffered a loss of purchasing power amounting to \$581 per year.

The economic circumstances in British Columbia, and in Canada as a whole, are extremely serious and demand attention on the part of the government. This is where Bill C-78 comes in. Perhaps it was not intended to address the overwhelming unemployment problem, but it does not even effectively address the question of lay-offs and of providing benefits to laid-off workers. It is intended to provide assistance to laid-off workers who are 54 years of age and older. As I said, by its title it sounds as if it may do a great deal, but in fact Bill C-78 applies only to a very few laid-off workers in a very few industries in a very few regions. Actually, it does not apply in British Columbia at all. Another subject which concerns me very deeply is that it does not touch, or barely touches, women in the labour force who are 54 years of age or over.

Let us look at the numbers. There are the designated areas in Quebec of Sept-Îles, Port-Cartier and Schefferville where the unemployment and lay-off problem is extremely serious. Of 566 laid-off workers in Sept-Îles, ten are between the ages of 54 and 65 and are, therefore, eligible for benefits under Bill C-78. In Schefferville, 16 of 286 laid off workers are eligible, and nine of the 109 management personnel laid off are eligible. In total, only 35 out of 961 are eligible for benefits under Bill C-78.

The total number of people across the country who will be eligible to receive benefits were estimated this afternoon at only 850. It would appear to me—and certainly I stand to be corrected—that 500 of those 850 are already receiving benefits