

Labour Adjustment Benefits

you?" I would love to say it; but try as I might, I cannot find anything for which people in my industry, the forest industry, can be thankful. Other than those political appointees and the thousands of bureaucrats who will be required to shuffle paper around to make sense of this matter, I cannot find anyone else who has much for which to be thankful as a result of the great lengths of imagination to which the minister and his staff must have gone in order to produce this bill. It is mindboggling.

I would also like to refer to Clause 14(2) on page 11 of the bill, concerning work-sharing, agreements, which states:

(2) For the purposes of this Act, the weekly insurable earnings of a qualified employee for any week of employment under a work sharing agreement approved pursuant to section 37 of the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971, is the lesser of

- (a) the total amount the employee would have earned for that week if he had worked a full working week for the employer he worked for under the agreement; and
- (b) the maximum weekly insurable earnings, as determined pursuant to that Act, for that week.

Mr. McDermid: Say that again?

Mr. Kristiansen: Apart from the difficulty that we laymen, who are supposedly here to govern experts, may have in determining just what all of this means, many people, including myself, who are very active in relation to workers and their problems from one end of the country to the other, are very leery of any government, be it of any political stripe, which attempts to interfere in what should be a matter to be determined by management and employees within a given company or industry. If the government, by this measure, is attempting to take unto itself the power to determine whether to encourage people in an industry to adopt what is sometimes called work sharing—I prefer to call it unemployment sharing—then I think that is a very dangerous approach. It has long been my feeling and that of many others, I might say, in the Canadian labour force, particularly those who are privileged to represent people in an elective capacity within that labour force—

Mr. McDermid: We all do!

Mr. Kristiansen: —that it is fundamentally wrong to take away or encourage the taking away of rights which are enjoyed by someone, by virtue of written inclusion in a collective agreement or contract, without the mutual consent of management and the union, and without the consent of the affected individual. Even if management and union agree to take away such rights, that union and that management have no right even to act together to remove those rights without the employee's consent if a contract or collective agreement states that an employee has certain rights. The government certainly does not have the right, unless the individual affected consents. When you have an industrial operation, or any other type of employment, where the people, due to their seniority, have the right to remain employed in a period when some employees are laid off, no one has the right to remove that right or to attempt to encourage the removal of that right unless those persons expressly consent.

● (1730)

I know the concept of job ownership is not one universally accepted in this country as yet. People talk about the rights that go with the investment of capital, but people who invest their labour power and their lives for 10, 20 or 30 years, often at considerable risk to their health, do have a right to job ownership, within definitions accepted by large numbers within Canadian society, and a proprietary right in that job as well. They will defend those rights against management, government and, if necessary, against their own union representatives if those representatives fail to do their jobs as the collective agreement outlines them. I suggest it is very risky and very wrong for the government to even encourage those people to sacrifice those rights unless they are willing to sacrifice themselves for what they deem to be the better good of their fellows.

I am also upset with the method of designation of the regions or industries and how those designations are to be made. Anybody with that kind of power should be selected on some more fair basis than simply by the governor in council or the cabinet. It should be so structured under any piece of legislation that attempts to bring in a change such as does this bill that representatives who are duly appointed, selected, elected, or whatever, by the various component groups which make up Canadian industry should be automatically on such a board, rather than having its members selected at a political whim. The board itself is politically appointed, and the designations will cause a great deal of difficulty because they are left so open. As I understand it, there are only to be some four to six designations per year because of the shortage of funds—and I may have something to say about that later—will cause a great deal of difficulty. There will be a great deal of flexibility of choice by this politically appointed board as to which communities receive the benefits. I presume, even though I am skeptical, that there are some real benefits attached to such flexibility, but there will be difficulty with regard to the selection of those communities that will derive this government's self-defined benefits.

I looked to other funds and programs which have been set up by this government, such as the Western Development Fund, to get an indication of how this power would be used, particularly if the choices to be made are strictly political, made by politically appointed groups. There were two projects in western Canada last year funded from the Western Development Fund. One happened to be within the constituency of the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy), and the other happened to be within the riding of a former minister of the environment, in Kamloops, and involved the native Band from which that minister came. That is rather suspect, with all the hoop-la surrounding the fact that this fund was for regional development. I begin to wonder, about this especially in view of the fact that I believe the five regions that have been mentioned to date under this program are all within ridings represented by members of the party which forms the government. Having that in view and the other experience, I am more than just a little suspicious and