

At the most, the program will help some 1,000 employees over the age of 50 go into a leisurely form of early retirement. One thousand persons per year really only represents .1 per cent of all of the unemployed people in Canada. That is the measly amount of assistance that the program purports to give. I think that is an astonishing and appalling condemnation of the over-all policies of the government which have led the country to its knees, economically speaking.

The program will only benefit .01 per cent of our total work force and .05 per cent of the total work force in the age group 50 to 54. Or only one person out of 16,000 or 17,000 people in the work force would qualify for the benefits extended by this bill. As I said before, the program presents the illusion of action and it is most unfair to the other thousands and thousands of Canadian workers who will not be eligible for its benefits.

Finally, no accountability is shown by the governor in council for the basis on which the designated areas are selected, so the situation is wide open to abuse through political patronage. We do not want to see that happen, but if past experience is any indication it certainly will and that is most regrettable.

There must be more accountability, Mr. Speaker, and the provisions on reporting should be tightened. The quarterly report submitted to this House should include detail on the amount of information that is available as the basis for the position taken—

Mr. Caccia: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder whether the hon. member would permit a question?

Mr. Siddon: Mr. Speaker, I would prefer to take it at the end of my 20 minutes.

As I have said, there is no evidence that this program is part of an over-all industrial development plan. This is like prescribing an aspirin for a terminal illness. Until this government comes to grips with the need for an over-all development plan, the statistics on unemployment will continue to escalate. We need a plan that stresses opportunities for our young people and training for the unemployed and the unemployable.

Clause 16 will encourage people to moonlight or go into other types of marginal business by allowing them to keep 40 cents on every dollar earned in those pursuits. If they should take retraining, they will have to deduct the compensation received for taking the retraining program from any benefit received under the labour adjustment benefit plan. In fact, this proposal encourages people in their senior years to earn income on the side and not to upgrade their skills to keep up with the technological structuring that we are all concerned about these days.

We need to provide an industrial development plan which will put the focus on secondary industry and upgrade the extent to which we extract value from our natural resources. It must put emphasis on getting the megaprojects going. This ties in to taxation policy and the attitude of the government with respect to foreign investment. We must stop this attack on

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foreign investment and realize that people who come to Canada and take some risks by investing in capital and plant will produce jobs for Canadians. Many of us would rather see people coming here and investing in the future of the country than have them lending money to Canada at preferred rates of interest without taking any risk in the future of the country. The attack on investment from outside Canada must stop.

The attack on the small business sector, especially as reflected in the job-destroying budget of the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen)—as it was called by one columnist—and the whole thrust of the government intervening, regulating and overbearing on the private sector must stop. Changes in policy must be made in these areas before we can talk about bringing justice to those who have worked for decades. These people seek dignity. They want to go off every day with their lunch bucket, earn a living for their family and pay their income tax cheerfully. In this way they can feel they have a stake in the country and can make the choices that are in their own best interests.

It is obvious that there is not a shred of evidence that this program will be properly integrated with a long-range survey aimed at increasing and improving our productivity. It does not reflect any sense of the human worth of people who have been trained and who have worked hard and long in order to build this country to the height of prosperity and affluence which we enjoyed until a year or two ago.

There are some in this House, Mr. Speaker, who believe that robots and technology will take work away from human-kind. We often hear the statement that in future we will only have to work ten or 20 hours a week. If we ever reach the point where everyone can work for government shuffling paper, and there are machines for making all the paper and all the products, then we will be in a state of stagnation. It is only human effort and ingenuity which will allow us to grow and develop as human persons and expand the opportunities and demands for trades and manual skills.

Make no mistake about it, Mr. Speaker, the demand for trades and human vocational skills will be with us for centuries. If the human spirit is to be preserved, men and women must have something constructive and creative to do. They must feel free to enjoy the rewards of their efforts. Those who say that computers and technology will take over are wrong. In fact, we cannot take solace in more programs, more bureaucracies and regulations as substitutes for real employment. Real employment is the production of goods that Canadians need; but, more important, if this is to be a healthy and growing economy it must produce more of the goods that are needed by the rest of the world.

This proposal flies in the face of entrenching the productivity of the nation. It merely reflects the government's total lack of competence to determine what the real goals of a nation which our potential ought to be. Instead, a three-layered bureaucracy is proposed which would have people apply for benefits either through their employers, their unions or directly to the Labour Adjustment Review Board as set out in Clause 4 of the bill. They may have to wait for many months until their