

*Labour Adjustment Benefits*

the government accepted them. We were therefore able to obtain a definition of technological change within the bill. We think that is a very positive step.

Another concern which we raised during the committee stage was the problem of duplication; first, an area is designated by orders in council, by the cabinet—which we support because cabinet must answer to the electorate—but then there must be a board or commission set up to which applications must be made to receive benefits and further applications have to be made to the Unemployment Insurance Commission. We strongly feel that the board could be eliminated and the entire process handled by the Unemployment Insurance Commission.

It is our understanding that the budget comes under the Department of Labour, which may be the reason the board is established there. We have not been convinced of the need for a board and have attempted to get an amendment. We have cautioned the minister and the people that this could be a bureaucratic nightmare when applying for these benefits. Since we do not want to see this happen—I know the minister does not want to see this happen—it is my hope that he would give a commitment to come back to the House to suggest some amendments to speed up the process if this were to happen. I believe we would support that commitment.

As I have mentioned, the board or commission causes us some concern. We suggested that either the Canadian Employment Commission or the adjustment board handle applications, but not both. We did not succeed in getting that amendment.

Another matter which I initially raised in committee was that of the board's authority to enter premises. The five-member board was to be made up of one employee representative, one employer representative and three representatives which could be politically appointed. This make-up was proposed by the NDP and supported by us. We feel it is an important step except that those three representatives who can be appointed by the minister could be political appointments, which has been a habit with the Liberal Party. Our concern relates to the fact that these three members of the board would have the power to enter private premises under the provisions of the act. We feel they should not have that power and we raised this concern. The government brought in an amendment and we thank the minister for that. The amendment assures the privacy of individuals and does not give the board that authority.

Briefly, we supported the membership of the labour adjustment review board being more representative, with one representative from employees and one representative from employers. We supported the more strict administration and the enforcement of the act, the broadening of the mandate of the joint planning committees and the clarification of the application procedure to obtain an arbitrator to resolve disputes in the joint planning committees.

We did not support what we were voting on today, which was the measure to lengthen the notice of termination from 16 weeks. I believe the present notice of termination is a standard which is fair and has been set for all employers across the board.

We did not support another NDP proposal to allow the board to designate areas or industries. We felt very strongly that this had to be done by the cabinet and orders in council. The reason for this is that the government must answer to the public while the bureaucrats do not. If cabinet makes poor decisions on designations, it will have to answer to the electorate. This is the proper procedure. For that reason we did not support that amendment.

I would like to illustrate some of the overlaps among many of these boards and commissions which give us concern about the board and UIC being involved. There is the industrial and labour adjustment program, the Canadian Industrial Renewal Board, the old DREE boards—wherever they are now—and the Textile and Clothing Board, which I assume will be brought under the umbrella of this act through the amendments. We now have the labour adjustment review board. We want to make sure those programs dovetail and are not in conflict with one another.

The people who appeared before the committee to discuss these programs appeared to be as confused about them as we were. They were not sure about how these programs functioned. These are some of the questions which concerned us and we are cautioning the government about them at this time.

One of the most significant problems which has been overcome in this bill was that it did not cover technological change. This appeared to be the greatest concern of the workers and all those who heard their representations in committee would admit that it was probably the main theme. Workers are concerned about losing their jobs as a result of technological change. This is especially true of those who are older and live in industry towns where they may not have the opportunity to sell their homes because no one is moving there and because of technological change they may not be able to switch employment. For example, in some small towns where new automatic equipment is being installed in paper mills, much employment is being eliminated. It is an understandable concern and with today's rapid advancement in technology we have no idea what will happen in five years or ten years from now.

Although we support this bill, we feel it is a small step in the right direction. It is a step which indicates that the government is willing to accept that there are certain areas of Canada which have unique problems. We are not all the same from coast to coast and must take care of some of those people who do not have the same opportunities as those who live in urban areas. I refer to diversity of industry and opportunity for employment.

Some members from my own party have expressed some concerns to me. For example, my colleague from Moose Jaw (Mr. Neil) quite rightly asked, "What about a small industry in Moose Jaw where they have to close down because of economic conditions?". The industry there is not designated, but a few older workers there would fall within the category if the area was designated. That is a very real and genuine concern. It is something about which all members of the House