

Employment Support Bill

laid before Parliament forthwith upon the completion thereof or, if Parliament is not then sitting, on any of the first fifteen days next thereafter that Parliament is sitting."

and by renumbering clause 21 at line 8 as subclause 2 of clause 21.

Mr. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa-Whitby): Mr. Speaker, I should like to deal, as is not entirely the practice in the House, rather narrowly with the specific amendment we have before us.

An hon. Member: Amazing.

Mr. Broadbent: I should like to establish that the real title or description of this bill should be not what it presently is, namely, "an act to support employment in Canada by mitigating the disruptive effect on Canadian industry of the imposition of foreign import surtaxes or other actions of a like effect", but "a corporate welfare assistance act."

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Carried.

An hon. Member: Will you vote against it?

Mr. Broadbent: Indeed, as will other members of the New Democratic Party. This has been made clear at every stage of the debate on this legislation.

Mr. Prud'homme: How much did you pay for your foreign car?

Mr. Broadbent: As is not infrequently the case, the hon. member's information is incorrect. I am the proud owner of a Pontiac made in this country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: We have here a bill, as I hope to make clear in my comments on the amendment, which will certainly not guarantee employment to Canadians. There is no such guarantee in the bill. It is the stated intention of the legislation, but there is no guarantee that we shall obtain this result. What it does guarantee is the maintenance of corporate profits to certain enterprises which will be able to apply for assistance.

At the committee stage I introduced an amendment which would at least have had the effect of curtailing some of the discretionary power given to the board by insisting that a minimum of 80 per cent of the employment level existing prior to the assistance period would be maintained. In my judgment, whatever criticisms one can make of this bill—serious criticisms can be made of this paltry sum of \$80 million, but that question aside—if we had a guarantee in the bill that provided effective control over the dispensation of funds to ensure that the funds would go to maintain employment levels, then this at least would be something that the New Democratic Party could accept in principle. But such provision is entirely lacking from this bill.

The spokesmen for the government, including the minister, rejected in committee stage a proposal that would have ensured that the discretionary authority of the board would be restricted to an 80 per cent level of employment so as to ensure funds would not be given to any company simply to renovate its capital equipment at public expense and lay off many workers. However, I will come back to

this point in a moment. I turn to the final clause in the bill as it now stands, which provides:

• (5:40 p.m.)

The minister shall as soon as possible after the end of each fiscal year prepare a report on the administration of this act during that fiscal year and shall cause such report to be laid before parliament forthwith upon the completion thereof or, if Parliament is not then sitting, on any of the first fifteen days next thereafter that Parliament is sitting.

What is wrong with that clause? The first thing that I say is wrong with it is that the report is to be an annual one. There is to be an annual report made on emergency legislation, legislation that dispenses millions of dollars of public funds to private corporations. I submit that such provision is not at all adequate. Parliament needs to be kept informed, as I shall illustrate in a moment, of all details on a regular basis, certainly more frequently than annually. In such case we would be able to see what is happening in terms of this legislation that the government has brought in to deal with the current economic emergency. An annual report would give us lots of time to see what went wrong afterwards, perhaps, but would give us no opportunity to assess in mid-course what is going wrong, particularly in reference to employment levels.

The second thing that is wrong with the final clause as it stands is that no reference is made to the inclusion of a list of firms who will receive this money. If the common practice of this government prevails, we will not be provided with such a list even in the annual report. I say that is wrong for this reason. Over the past few years the federal government, along with the provincial governments of this country, have provided hundreds of millions of dollars to private corporations without in any way making a serious assessment of whether the money so disbursed benefited the public. To my knowledge, no study of this kind has ever been carried out. We have had pious hopes frequently expressed by the minister, as well as good will, to the effect that public money that is spent on aiding private enterprise will somehow have a spin-off effect and we will all benefit in some wonderful way.

I would refer the minister to an article which appeared in *Canadian Forum* some two months ago dealing with a serious assessment of the province of Ontario's financial give-away program, a program dealing with what are called forgivable loans. This article points out that millions of dollars have been spent by the province of Ontario on private corporations, with little or no direct, causally related benefit in terms of employment patterns, and having a very definite effect on the encouragement of further takeover of Canadian business by foreign corporations, specifically United States corporations.

I suggest it is time that the minister's own department did a study of the effect the kind of assistance this government is providing, this kind of corporate welfare assistance, as I referred to it earlier. This is another reason why I object to clause 21 as it now stands. We need a list of the companies that are to be given grants and we need it at monthly intervals. It seems to me that if such a list were provided we would discover the following. I shall have to look at the annual report, because I do not expect that my motion will be accepted by the government, but I expect to find that most of this money will be given to foreign-

[Mr. Speaker.]