

*Labour Adjustment Benefits*

50 to 60 employees per province. I would suggest that perhaps in Ontario and Quebec it might jump up to 200 employees because the program must be administered. We are looking at a section of a department with perhaps 1,000 employees. The government cannot afford to expand the public service by one more person. Right now the government is taking in excess of 40 per cent of the gross national product to run government. It is like a cancerous growth which keeps expanding and expanding and yet is unproductive. It is consuming the wealth of the country. It is not creating, it is not manufacturing, it is not finding new resources, it is not developing resources. It is stifling free enterprise and the individual initiative of a man or a woman who wants to go out and do something, who wants to build, or who perhaps has visions of the country.

● (2140)

Let me turn to some of the clauses in the bill. I should like to read from Clause 3 entitled, "Designation of Industries". Of course the industries must be designated, but how will it be done? Clause 3 reads:

(1) For the purposes of this act, the governor in council may, by order, designate any industry either generally or with respect to any region of Canada.

(2) An industry may be designated generally pursuant to subsection (1) if the governor in council is satisfied that—

Let us look at some of the conditions, how this flows on. Certainly it is a public service document. I can see public servants sitting and writing the document. It continues:

(a) the industry in Canada generally is undergoing significant economic adjustment of a non-cyclical nature by reason of import competition or by reason of industrial restructuring implemented pursuant to a policy or program of the Government of Canada to encourage such restructuring;—

What the hell does that mean? We should think about what we are passing and what we are referring to committee. We should think of its wording. It throws up a smoke screen so that the public servant at the designated level will be empowered to do what he wishes. It continues:

(b) the economic adjustment referred to in paragraph (a) is resulting in a significant loss of employment in the industry in Canada generally.

This is open to total interpretation. Clause 3(3) reads:

An industry may be designated with respect to any region of Canada pursuant to subsection (1) if the governor in council is satisfied that

(a) the industry in that region is undergoing significant economic adjustment of a non-cyclical nature; and

(b) the economic adjustment referred to in paragraph (a) is resulting in a severe economic disruption in that region and in a significant loss of employment in the industry in that region.

It goes on and on. The problem is that we do not read these bills. We are too ready to refer these bills to committee, bring them back here, and then many people rise to speak on them who have never even read them.

I do not want to be unkind to the minister because I think he is attempting to address a problem, but I should like to suggest that the problem is not acute; the cause of the problem is acute. The cause of the problem is the downturn in our economy. The downturn in our economy was caused primarily in the past two years by the National Energy Program disguised as the budget last year. It is being assaulted again in a

very direct manner by the budget introduced on November 12. I feel the minister should spend his time addressing that problem. The minister should go to cabinet to try to convince some of his colleagues to reconsider—and I am referring particularly to the Minister of Finance—some of the very retrogressive steps in the budget.

I should like to return to Clause 4 of Bill C-78 entitled, "Labour Adjustment Review Board" which reads:

There is hereby established a board, to be known as the Labour Adjustment Review Board, consisting of not more than five members.

Of course they are appointed members. Will they be appointed on their knowledge of industry, on their knowledge of the area, or because they are good Liberal hacks or supporters? I question this. Every time we see a board established, we know its political affiliation. It continues:

(2) Each member of the board shall be appointed by the minister to hold office during pleasure.

It is the pleasure of the minister. It continues:

(3) If any member of the board is absent or unable to act, the minister may appoint a person to act as a member for the time being, but no person so appointed has authority to act as a member for a period exceeding 90 days without the approval of the minister.

It is clearly open to abuse. I should like to turn to Clause 12 entitled, "Qualification for Benefits". What about a person who has worked for 25 years in a plant in Windsor, has been damn good at his job, has gone home every night to his family, was able to take them on a holiday, and is suddenly thrown out of work at 52 years of age, the prime of life? That is the prime of life, if one happens to be 51. Clause 12(1) reads:

The Commission may determine that an employee who has been certified under section 9 is qualified to receive labour adjustment benefits if

(a) he is a Canadian citizen resident in Canada or a permanent resident within the meaning given that term by subsection 2(1) of the Immigration Act, 1976;

(b) he has been employed in the designated industry of which the Canadian establishment from which he was laid off is part for at least 10 years in the 15 years immediately preceding his effective date of lay-off and was paid for at least 1,000 hours of employment in that industry in each of those years;

(c) he was, on his effective date of lay-off, not less than 54 years of age nor more than the earliest age at which a retirement pension could be paid to him under the Canada Pension Plan or the Quebec Pension Plan, whether or not he has applied therefor;

(d) he has claimed and exhausted all benefits under the Unemployment Insurance Act, 1971, to which he was entitled subsequent to his lay-off;

(e) he is not receiving a retirement pension under the Canada Pension Plan or the Quebec Pension Plan; and

(f) he has no present prospect of employment, whether with or without training or relocation assistance, or has accepted employment with earnings that are less than his average weekly insurable earnings.

● (2150)

That is no help. I can just see the situation in the Manpower office, or whatever this new section of the department is called. A young fellow of about 25 will interpret this and tell a man who has worked for 25 years that he is eligible for relocation. It is a sad day when we have to look to this kind of program in a country that has the vibrant, intelligent people that we have, who want to work.

The problem lies in the economic climate that we have created in Canada. We are not doing anything about the