

*Regional Unemployment*

entitled to unemployment insurance. It disgusts me and through all this I find some asking: Can you help me get a job? Everywhere I inquired I was asked to complete job applications. I had to state my work experience.

Mr. Speaker, how are young people supposed to answer such a question? They had no opportunity to acquire any experience. They should be given the possibility to start acquiring experience in life. Some openness of mind is needed. Mr. Speaker, everything seems aimed at making life harder for people. Here is an example. Take Canada Works, a good program. People are asked to prepare projects. In my riding I was pleased to find that quite a number of organizations and intermediary bodies have submitted projects and have tried earnestly to prepare very good job-creating projects and give an impetus to the development of our area, our province and our country. But after an analysis is made in cooperation with either the advisory committees or the member of parliament, manpower officials meet with a refusal from some provincial officials, at least in my province. This is what happens, they veto the projects. Nobody knows why, but they are against it. Every effort is made to go ahead, but those people veto the projects. Mr. Speaker, I think it is time we had something specific and precise on that matter . . .

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier):** Order please!

**Hon. Marcel Lessard (Minister of Regional Economic Expansion):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I should like to refer to some of the remarks made during the debate by the three opposition spokesmen, the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald), the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) and the hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert).

I shall begin by the latter, who has just resumed his seat. I should like to tell him that, of course, we are greatly concerned, myself especially, about the general unemployment problem in Quebec, but I am also concerned about the rest of the country. The hon. member for Bellechasse mentioned his own area on the south shore, as he calls it. In fact, it is an area with which I am somewhat familiar, though not as much as he is, of course. I am aware of some of the problems in this area, and I would feel inclined to look favourably upon some of the problems and some of the answers suggested. As a matter of fact, in the last few weeks, I had the opportunity to consider one suggestion. Of course, it is very limited, but the project materializes, we shall have done something to help a municipality in the constituency of the hon. member to develop the structures which might prove somewhat more attractive for industries that wish to settle in the area. It would be a first step, and I hope there will be many others. I should like to point out to the hon. member that even though there is no specific program for his particular constituency or area, many departmental programs affect somewhat, although not enough to his mind, the economy of his area and might help to some extent.

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

● (1630)

I would like to take up one of his comments with which I agree, but I would alter it slightly. He states for example what our young people are told unfortunately too often when they reach the labour market; employers to whom they apply for a job ask them whether they have some experience.

I agree with him that such an attitude of some employers towards young workers who have just graduated from our institutions is absolutely incomprehensible. This is why representations were made to the government on several occasions. As a backbencher I also made suggestions concerning such a behaviour among employers. The Department of Manpower and Immigration has amended its educational programs to include a training program on the job. Under this program which was launched four years ago already, 75 per cent of the salary is paid for a period extending up to a year in some cases, but generally for 26 weeks, sharing with the employer the additional cost for training a new employee and keeping another worker as a replacement, not to mention that total productivity will decline during a certain period. This program exists and is operating but in my opinion, it should be used more often. However, I think that the establishment of such a structure reflects awareness of that special problem. I hope it can be improved to solve more specifically that dilemma confronting young workers arriving on the labour market.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) specially mentioned unemployment. He dealt with the regional economic expansion program, but he dwelled on current unemployment in the country. He referred to its causes, its effects, and possible remedies. It is evident that we are all concerned by that unemployment problem. Nobody is happy to see so many idle individuals, but a program aimed at creating what is called in certain quarters full employment could imply the control of employment and work could become compulsory. If we want full employment, it would mean compelling people to work, to take jobs that they do not necessarily want. I believe this is not acceptable in a system such as ours.

Of course, the hon. member for Egmont, the official spokesman for the opposition, zeroed in on the department's weaknesses. But he obviously failed to refer to what the department has done. We do not expect to be congratulated or highly praised by the opposition, that is normal, it is not necessarily the role of the opposition, although it might be good once in a while to recognize that things have been accomplished, that efforts have been made by the government and our institutions to meet problems that we recognized as being very, very serious. He quoted a great many statistics and I will not attempt to review them. It is easy to recite statistics, especially since he included several that I had personally referred to before the standing committee of the House at the time the estimates of my department were considered.

Most of those statistics are real, alas too real, and I would have liked to be able to quote more reassuring ones, but unfortunately, things being as they are, I have had to face the facts and say things as I saw them. I hope at least my