

Government Orders

[Translation]

The Committee thinks that these proposals are extremely valid, and I agree with it. We on this side of the House are pleased that all the amendments which I just spoke of were made to the Bill. They go a long way to meeting some of the concerns raised about Bill C-21. But, Mr. Speaker, they do not deal with everything.

Opposition Members and many groups who met members of the legislative committee felt that it was not right to finance other training programs and increased special benefits from the unemployment insurance account. Their criticisms were sincere, but the Government does not agree.

As for parental benefits and those for workers aged 65 and over, these significant improvements are really part of a modern unemployment insurance plan.

[English]

With regard to training, we are building on a foundation that is already established. The UI program taxes employed Canadians and employers, so that assistance can be provided to workers who lose their jobs, both with income support and with the opportunity to train for new employment, and to build a more stable future.

As I have said in the past, our workers face many new challenges today. They require new and changing skills, as they go about their job, just on a day-to-day basis. As a result, many unemployed Canadians need more than income assistance. They need training and other types of help in order to find lasting, secure, and satisfying jobs. The government believes, therefore, that UI funds provide an entirely appropriate and practical way of meeting those training needs.

Moreover, this source of funding is entirely consistent with our goal of encouraging the private sector to play a more dominant role in training. In order to pay for these new priorities, the UI program of course must be made more efficient. Having said that, let me state emphatically that the UI program will continue to play a critical role in Canada's social support system. It provides, and it will in future provide income replacement to those who need it. In addition, we will maintain the ability of the UI program to respond to differences in regional labour

markets. The new variable entrance requirement will, if anything, make the program more regionally sensitive.

[Translation]

The legislative committee and others who followed the deliberations know that companies, unions and others were unanimous on the need for increased training nationwide.

Mr. Speaker, the Government believes that the business community, labour, non-governmental organizations and community interest groups who provide training should have their say in the design of a new training program as part of the labour force development strategy.

That is why I began a major consultation with the private sector, in particular, with representatives of workers, business, training institutions and others. Their recommendations will help us flesh out the specific measures of the program.

In implementing a labour force development strategy, the Government will fully maintain its commitment to employment equity objectives, that is, ensure that women, native people, members of minority groups and the disabled will be able to benefit from the new opportunities provided in all our programs.

[English]

By way of conclusion, the government had to make some very difficult decisions in drafting Bill C-21. The situation that we confront is neither black nor white. It is a question of finding the right mix among measures that result in improvements and those which minimize any potential adverse impacts. We have been very conscious of those difficult realities and we believe that we have achieved the right balance with sensitivity to local and national needs.

I am very anxious to see Bill C-21 passed as it will enable us to launch a major new effort to increase the training of Canada's labour force, and ensure that it has the requisite skills in demand by employers and by those workers themselves. The task before us is primarily one for employers, workers and educators.

Bill C-21 will provide the government with the necessary resources to encourage those groups, our partners, to get on with the job.

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence): Mr. Speaker, I rise, obviously, in opposition to this particular bill,