

*Manpower and Immigration Council*

beginning to take hold—there were 830 applicants for retraining in Toronto. In June of this year there were 262. In July of last year there were 805 applicants; in July of this year there were 92. That is a reduction of about 85 per cent. In August of last year there were 995 applicants for retraining; this year there were 239. In September of last year there were 1,154 applicants; in September of this year there were 270. So when we were giving the figures we were not pulling them out of the air. We were not trying to doctor them or make the government look bad. We were giving the figures month by month.

I spoke about Ottawa. Let me put those figures on the record again. It should not take the parliamentary secretary very long to check my facts if he wants to do so. Privately I will be very happy to give him the name and telephone number of the person who gave me this information. At the retraining school in Ottawa in September of last year there were between 200 and 300 applicants for retraining courses. In September of this year there were between 30 and 40. That is a reduction of 85 per cent.

There is the situation, Mr. Speaker. We are not saying this because we are happy. We are not saying it because we will gain political capital out of it. We are telling the minister and the government these facts which have been brought to our attention in order that the problem may be alleviated. I know that hon. members on this side of the house will report on their own areas. Other areas have not yet been discussed but the figures there are just as bad as those for Ottawa which I have given. I am sure that when I can contact the proper person in my own city of Winnipeg I will discover that that city has just the same kind of report to make.

We are pointing out these facts to the minister because we have believed for years that the retraining of manpower and the upgrading of the skills of the work force of Canada are of the utmost importance. We thought the situation would improve when the reorganization took place, the department was changed and the minister was given, so far as this house was concerned, virtually a blank cheque to hire the kind of people with the skills that the old national employment service never had, the economists, statisticians and sociologists who are required in any modern manpower program. The minister has been very successful in building up his staff. When the government asked for and obtained the approval of parliament to pay the people who took training courses a living allowance,

we hoped this would permit them to continue to take the courses in their entirety without having to stop in the middle because they could not afford to continue, as happened so frequently in the past. We hoped the situation would change. The situation has changed but instead of changing for the better, as most of us expected and as all of us hoped, it has changed for the worse.

I genuinely regret that the minister, having been given the facts as he was yesterday—and I think we gave them in a very straightforward, factual way without any real criticism of the minister or his department—did not come here with answers which would reassure not only the members of the house but the people working in the field, the teachers and principals in charge of the schools who are not concerned about the natural and to be expected wrangles and differences which take place among political parties but want to see a job done. I say with all sincerity that I do not think the teachers, principals and counsellors give two hoots whether the program is being operated or financed by the federal government, the provincial government, the local board of education or the local school board. They are interested in seeing that the people who need assistance in upgrading their skills get that assistance. I tell the minister and the government that these people are heartsick. They do not know what is happening. They do not know why it is happening. All they know is that a program for which they had a great deal of hope has turned sour.

I tell the minister that his explanation today is completely unacceptable to me. When we get to the minister's estimates, at which time we can discuss these matters in considerable detail, we will expect, indeed we will do more than expect, we will demand and insist upon detailed explanations. We do not want the excuses, the glossing over, the brushing under the rug that we got from the minister today. We want a hard, factual explanation from him and the department as to why the number of people who are being retrained in our manpower training centres has gone down so disastrously.

**Mr. L. R. Sherman (Winnipeg South):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to say one or two things in speaking to this legislation. I will be reasonably brief. The first matter arises from a question asked a few moments ago by the hon. member for Halifax (Mr. McCleave). It seems to me that the minister missed the point of the question of that hon. member.