

National Training Act

moving forward again. Whether it is a family farm or a major mining or manufacturing firm, business needs to know that there is a national policy framework, that the government is serious about the policies which will guide economic development, and that these policies will be fair and consistent and enable individuals and companies to plan and invest with confidence in the future of Canada.

Our educational systems need to know what is the economic strategy so that schools, community colleges, universities and businesses which conduct industrial training programs can take account in their own planning of future economic developments. Our municipalities, our regional economic development councils and organizations representing our primary producers have important parts to play in economic development. The federal government should recognize that it is the responsibility of provincial governments to provide much of the leadership, the impetus and the reliable information to allow them to participate fully.

● (1610)

In the Atlantic provinces we have some of the greatest universities in Canada and they perform their function well. We have not given appropriate attention to the need to relate certain kinds of training to the actual requirements of the work place. The acquisition of skills must be tied to the economy and the encouragement of economic growth.

We need both institutional training and industrial training. They are both integral parts of an effective and efficient training system. These training modes do not necessarily represent alternative approaches to training, nor are they expressions of divergent training philosophies. They are, in reality, no more than different training environments, each with different inherent advantages and disadvantages with respect to the training being conducted.

I have some suggestions for the minister to consider in respect to this limited but very important measure before us. We need a very substantial emphasis on on-the-job training, not only in the conventional trades where this is already happening, but also in almost every other fact of enterprise. We need an altered view of the role of educational institutions to increase their relevance to the community and economic development requirements. For example, an increased emphasis on continued adult education and a design of business administration programs which have a greater small business orientation are possible directions.

We must bear in mind that small production units are characteristics of Atlantic Canada and there are limitations on the ability of small firms to conduct effective training programs. Good export performance, effective research and development are often absent also and require some economies of scale. They are important to the creation of jobs.

The problem is how to achieve such economies without at the same time destroying the distinctive positive qualities of smaller enterprises. I would recommend that the minister consider a program to encourage consortia with regard to raw

materials purchasing, production, warehousing, marketing and the operations of research facilities.

He might also consider a privately sponsored export development corporation to promote export documentation, insurance and financial services to Atlantic firms as well as initial market identification. At the same time we should also consider the use of incubator centres to provide a full range of services like bookkeeping, copying, and secretarial services to help new businesses get through the crucial start-up phase.

Another initiative that should be studied is a program to facilitate and encourage joint ventures of Atlantic enterprises with foreign firms. Often a joint venture in which the foreign firm provides the knowledge and expertise is the only way for local enterprise to enter new highly specialized fields.

High technology firms are at the cutting edge of the wave of the future. Canada is a world leader in electronics and communications. We have to build on our successes, go with the winners and pursue vigorously as part of a program dedicated to the economic recovery of this nation.

If this, indeed, is to be the policy of the government, then clearly there is an important need to structure our training programs to meet this challenge. We can act upon our opportunities, but first our heavy emphasis on natural resource upgrading, investment in large capital works and subsidization of existing enterprise will have to be supplemented by an emphasis on people's skills and productivity and on the attraction of new activities based on modern technology.

The government has brought forward piecemeal a reasonably good piece of legislation, the principle of which I shall have no difficulty in supporting.

I have proposed that this be placed in perspective as part of a national development plan for the economic recovery of our nation. It is great to have trained people—indeed it is essential—but it is better to have trained people with jobs to go to.

In Atlantic Canada, rural Quebec, parts of northern Ontario and in pockets all across our country, there are widespread regional disparities crying to be addressed. The solution to these problems is central to the economic recovery of our nation, requires the urgent attention of our government and requires it now.

Mr. Albert Cooper (Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak on Bill C-115. I believe it is a bill which focuses on many of the concerns of Canadians today, particularly in these times we are living in. We have a difficult economic environment today where not only are people facing high levels of unemployment and many Canadians are desperately looking for jobs, but they are desperately looking for training opportunities as well.

I would like to begin by pointing out the more positive aspects of this bill as I see them. The first significant proposal concerns the extension of the training period for people undertaking a training program. This is an important measure at a time when we are faced with a very complex work environment. As a result of our increasingly complex industries there