

Alleged Failure of Employment Policies

There are other issues concerning the relationship of the scheme to the regular educational system and to the support we give to the post-secondary education structure.

Nevertheless, I want to assure hon. members that I do not take a casual attitude toward this question. We realize in the department that whatever decisions are made will affect the pattern of training available to all members of the labour force, especially the older workers who require it most. We want to be sure we make a right decision; we do not want to shoot from the hip. At the present time a research program is going on in collaboration with the provinces on this very problem. The question has also been referred for advice to the national Canada Manpower and Immigration Council. Last June I asked the council to take a careful look at the occupational training of adults to determine whether the provisions of the program, including allowances, should be extended to groups not presently eligible. I went on to say to them:

I would like you to do this, bearing in mind the need to maintain the present intensity of coverage of groups now included in the training program and the nature of the federal government's role in adult training.

With the help of the research program undertaken with the provinces, and advice from the national council, we shall be able to arrive at a policy on bringing additional groups into the training program, bearing in mind our wish to do the best job we can within the budget now available.

The hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) mentioned the 52-week period. We have this matter under consideration now. We are working toward making it more flexible; our desire is to do more by way of upgrading, to go beyond the 52 weeks. This is very much in our minds and we hope

to reach some decision on it. We have made some changes in our commuting allowances—

Mrs. MacInnis: May I ask the minister whether he intends to do something about removing discrimination against women?

Mr. MacEachen: The hon. member puts the question in a way which I do not accept. She is speaking of a rule which is applicable to all persons, men and women, in relation to their attachment to the labour force. What she is really asking is whether we would remove discrimination—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacEachen: I do not mind the word "discrimination" here, because when you make a distinction of any kind it amounts to an exercise in discrimination. In this case it is not a discrimination against women because it relates to all members of the labour force.

Mrs. MacInnis: May I put my question more clearly? Is the minister considering declaring that women who have been engaged for three years in the labour of their homes shall be counted as members of the labour force for the purposes of the act?

Mr. MacEachen: That would imply a major policy change. Obviously, we shall consider it. The hon. lady has a private members' bill on the Order Paper in her name and she has made her case today. We shall consider it. May I conclude by thanking hon. members for raising this subject and for giving me an opportunity to expose the splendid Canada Manpower Training Program.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): You have certainly exposed it.

Mr. Baldwin: Indecent exposure!

At 5 p.m. the House adjourned, without question put, pursuant to Standing Order.
