

The removal from the Adult Occupational Training Act of the 52-week limitation on training is an essential step toward helping the low income, poorly educated unemployed toward meaningful training and employment. The Progressive Conservative party has pledged that it will abolish this time limit on these programs. In addition to these three faults there is a fourth problem with the manpower training program that has become more crucial since the new Income Tax Act made training allowances taxable. This problem concerns unemployment insurance as it relates to the manpower training program.

Currently, a person employed in insurable employment who is being trained under an occupational training course will not be eligible for unemployment insurance while in receipt of a training allowance, but will retain his benefit and contribution rights. The qualifying period will be extended to include any period during which he is being trained under an occupational training program and is in receipt of a training allowance. Similarly, his benefit period, which normally runs for a maximum of 52 weeks from the week of the claim, will be extended to a maximum of 156 weeks.

With these stipulations I do not quibble. However, I would argue that trainees should have unemployment insurance premiums deducted from their allowances for the entire duration of their courses. I discussed this matter with the minister and he was very sympathetic to my point of view. I hope he will be giving more consideration to the problem. In that way, Mr. Speaker, these people would build up credits and could qualify for unemployment insurance benefits if they were unable to secure employment upon completion of their courses. When they complete their courses, particularly in the schools of Cape Breton Island, under the present administration they have no hope of finding a job, given the figures I quoted a few moments ago. If they had some benefits to fall back on they would be in better shape, particularly if they found it necessary to move away from the island. I hope this will not be the case, because we get a little tired of exporting our brains to Upper Canada. I see the minister smiling.

The case to be made for such a step is very straightforward. The federal government, by removing the three-year labour restriction in the act has recognized the hardships now imposed by the act on young people with little work experience who are unable to secure jobs. It took them a long time to recognize that, Mr. Speaker. For ages we have been telling them that there should never have been a three-year period, it should have been only one year. When young men and women come out of school feeling that they have to kill time around the streets for three years before they can get training, it is very discouraging. They become depressed and disillusioned. They cannot find the employment they seek and neither can they get training because, until this bill was introduced, they had to be three years on the labour market. Thank goodness that provision is to be changed.

These young people are unable to accumulate enough unemployment insurance credits before they take a training course to qualify for UIC benefits after the course if they are still unsuccessful in their job seeking. I thought the minister might have taken care of that problem in this bill. His refusal to incorporate such a change in Bill C-195

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is puzzling. On April 20, 1972, he promised to consider the matter and reply to my question the following day. I am sorry the minister has such a short memory that he had forgotten his promise when he introduced the bill six days later, on April 26.

If trainees are to pay income tax on their allowances, they should be able to make unemployment insurance contributions and collect benefits if they need them at the conclusion of the training. This is already being done in the case of students at the Coast Guard College at Point Edward. If unemployment insurance is to be truly universal as the government apparently intended, it should also apply to manpower trainees. It would also be fair, I maintain, for the federal government to be consistent with arrangements in private business and industry and to pay half the cost of unemployment insurance premiums in its capacity as the temporary employer of the trainees. These are not the only ways in which the manpower training program could be improved if it is to function adequately to aid the hard core unemployed and the poor, but these four faults of the Adult Occupational Training Act could easily have been rectified in Bill C-195.

There are a number of other points I should like to draw to the attention of the minister. One is the question of hairdressing courses. I have dealt with this matter at the provincial or regional level and have been informed that there has been a cutback in training people in hairdressing, particularly on Cape Breton Island, because it is felt there will be too many hairdressers. This may be so, but not everyone trained there will stay; they may go to Ontario, Quebec or other parts of Canada. However, if they had this skill it would stand them in good stead, for when they move along voluntarily or even if they are forced to move because of the inadequate economic policies of this government, such training should provide them with employment. I hope the minister will look into the problem and ascertain if there is any reason for a cutback in this regard.

• (1540)

Schools in Sydney and the surrounding area were told that no more applicants for hairdressing courses would be accepted. At the same time, the school in Halifax enrolled 15 students. It seems unusual to suggest that people in Halifax have more hair on their heads than the people of Cape Breton and need to look after it better. I do not know what the answer is, and I hope the minister will look into the matter.

I wish to raise another important point. Young lads interested in becoming trained morticians have come to me seeking help. Not everyone wants to be a mortician, but the job has to be done. Regrettably, in my province—I do not know if it happens in other provinces—people who are in business as morticians employ young men to do all the heavy work, lifting and on-the-job training, so to speak, for a small fee. When these young men want more money—and, after all, most of them are on call 24 hours a day—they are politely told by the proprietor of the establishment, "We cannot pay you any more. We can soon get other young men to take your place."

Usually these young men want more money so they can enrol in the appropriate school and obtain a licence as