

Adjournment Debate

It is also evident that current high levels of interest rates have not slowed down the rate of credit expansion or the Canadian economy. Data recently released by the Bank of Canada shows that chartered bank general loans continue to grow at very high rates and there have been similar high rates of growth recorded in other credit aggregates.

Canadian prices and costs also appear to be increasing at faster rates than those in United States. Statistics Canada reported that the consumer price index continued to rise quite strongly in May. By contrast, the inflation rate in the United States is running at a lower level. This will be reflected in both inflationary expectations and the prevailing level of interest rates.

There are good and valid reasons why there should be differences between the rates charged in Canada and the rates charged in the United States. While we would like to see interest rates in Canada as low, if not lower, than those in the United States, there are currently very real factors at play in Canada which do not allow that.

● (2215)

EMPLOYMENT—(A) ADULT ACADEMIC UPGRADING AT NIAGARA COLLEGE, (B) REASON FOR DEPARTMENTAL DECISION

Mr. Joe Reid (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, it is a Progressive Conservative philosophy and a basic responsibility of government to provide whatever opportunities are necessary to enable each individual through education to develop his or her potential to the fullest degree and to employ those talents to the greatest advantage. Education should be for full time as well as part-time students, for adults as well as the youth, for upgrading and updating as well as for the unemployed. That is why I was so distressed when I attended a meeting of Niagara College students involved in academic upgrading, a most basic course of education leading to a higher form of skill training. For these students it was their last opportunity to upgrade their academic education. The door has been closed. Without that higher level of academic training, they will be refused enrolment in a course which will give them an opportunity to develop a skill or trade.

One after the other those students stated that they just had to be given the chance to make something of themselves, and now that chance was being taken away. I am not certain why that basic course of adult training was terminated at Niagara College. The answer of the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) did not assist to any degree.

When the minister decreases the number of sponsored seats in a course of that nature, the province of Ontario will only sponsor 20 per cent of that number. A chain reaction is started by the Department of Employment and Immigration. Where there are fewer students, there are lay-offs, dismissals, and reassignments of academic upgrading and structures.

It is not good enough to say that those students can return to established schools of elementary and secondary training and education. These students had to steel themselves in order to return to a course established and promoted by this government. We cannot ask them to do more.

It is not an answer to say that there has been a reallocation of funds. There is no doubt that the apprenticeship program must be supported and funded. I hope the day will soon come when we can discontinue looking overseas for skilled workers because we will have enough trained people here to fill the jobs.

To say that we are diverting funds to programs where there are established job opportunities condemns forever a segment of the population to a status that we as a nation should not accept or condone. Students hit hardest are women, those on mother's allowance and welfare. There are many more in an urban riding such as mine who are seeking the opportunity to participate in such a course. They have been waiting for such an opportunity. That opportunity is no longer available to them. They are being condemned to a job as a waitress, bartender or babysitter.

The need for such a basic training program was emphasized in this college. The joint government approval to assist adults in below grade 12 levels raised enrolment of fee-paying students from 31 in December 1979 to 151 in December 1980. There is a current waiting list of over 200.

● (2220)

The advantages of adult education, the advantage of an adult setting, the opportunity of working at their own pace, the availability of financial assistance and support, counselling and instruction, gave hope to those students and offered a challenge and a chance which so many thought would never come to them. Now it may never come again, for in the Niagara College, a community college, that opportunity or that chance has been taken away from them. I suggest the minister should make a reassessment of his priorities so that this very basic organizational adult education training can continue at community colleges where it can do the most good.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dennis Dawson (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off by correcting the impression given by the hon. member. There is no question of phasing out the adult academic upgrading program at Niagara College. There was indeed a reduction in the number of training seats purchased from that college under the Canada Manpower Training Program, but contrary to the statement of the hon. member the program is not about to be abolished.

During the fiscal year 1980-81 the Employment and Immigration Commission had purchased 82 seats which, for all practical purposes, made it possible to enrol 147 students. For the current fiscal year, the commission bought 64 seats and expects some 115 students. The reason for this reduction is that the government has put the emphasis on employment-related programs. That decision was taken in 1977 as a result of the publication of a report of the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance which pointed out that basic education falls essentially under provincial jurisdiction. Subsequent