The Budget—Mr. Stevens

Is this not the same type of example? We have Canadians who want to be retrained or want to learn something, yet they need their Unemployment Insurance benefits while they are going to school. Is there really a difference between going to school and learning something and working on a community project?

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Speaker, I think that is an important question. Let me first clarify one statement made by the Hon. Member for Simcoe North (Mr. Lewis). Section 38 of the Unemployment Insurance Act has proven to be a very helpful support for many workers. It is not putting people back on voluntary work. In fact, if the Hon. Member looks at the program, he will find there are some 15,000 people over the past year who have been employed under Section 38. Most of that employment has been in resource-based industries such as mining, forestry and fishing. In Ontario the program has been largely taken up. There are people in Ontario, British Columbia and in other areas who are investing their labour and efforts in developing new productive uses of facilities. They are doing a lot of seed work, environmental clean-ups and so on. The work is not purely voluntary. It is designed for resource-based industries.

On the question of training, the fact is that a large number of people enrolled in training programs indeed receive Unemployment Insurance benefits. I forget the exact figures. I do not have them here, but I believe that some 25,000 people have received about $200 million of Unemployment Insurance benefits as income when enrolled in programs. The difference between them and the person in the circumstances the Hon. Member described is that the courses are assigned through the employment centre. The reason for doing that is that we have to maintain some control. Under the Act we have to confirm that a person is eligible for work or is enrolled in a legitimate training program. If someone simply on his or her own cognizance signs up for a training program and does not let us know or does not do it through our system, we do not know whether or not they are eligible for work. There really has to be a control mechanism to ensure that the Unemployment Insurance Program is not abused. That is the reason for doing it. I undertake to provide a more detailed answer to the Hon. Member. I will send him a letter as soon as I can to explain the procedure.

Mr. Waddell: Mr. Speaker, the Minister singled out the NEED Program as an example of job creation. I just returned from a visit to southwestern Ontario, the industrial heartland of Canada. I met with local councils, officials and businessmen. I was told that the NEED Program was totally inadequate and bureaucratic. I was told that they were short-term jobs and were limited to people who were exhaustees of Unemployment Insurance—about 27,000 or 28,000 jobs and about 600,000 exhaustees, and they were low paid to boot. Does the Minister agree with some of the jobs under the NEED Program, such as the counting of dogs in Windsor? Does he think that that is a good short-term job? What about university graduates who have been retrained, incidentally,

and are gathering brush in St. Catharines? Is that the kind of job in which he believes?

The Minister mentioned the private sector as being the engine of economic growth. I was told in southwestern Ontario that the private sector is mainly controlled by American businesses and that they were sucking out all the jobs from southwestern Ontario. If the Minister really believes in full employment, does he not agree that we must make some fundamental changes to the Canadian economy to bring it about?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Corbin): The Minister has 30 seconds in which to answer.

Mr. Axworthy: I would just say that, unlike the comments of the Hon. Member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mr. Waddell), we have a number of Members of Parliament from southwestern Ontario with whom I spoke who are coming in with proposals for new community centres, new industrial parks and new water and sewage systems for their communities. They are producing good, solid projects, not the fuzzy-wuzzy ones he mentioned. I do not think he has been travelling in southwestern Ontario. He is off on another trip somewhere.

Hon. Sinclair Stevens (York-Peel): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry our time ran out so quickly as far as questions for the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) are concerned. I certainly had a few questions I wanted to put to him. I noticed that in his speech he said it was time to be honest with the Canadian public. I would have liked to ask him whether he really feels his colleague, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde), was honest last night when he stated in his budget speech:

Over 600,000 more Canadians are expected to be working at the end of 1984 than at the end of 1982.

He did not make clear to the public that, as is reflected in The Economic Outlook for Canada tabled last night at page 16, in 1983 the amount of employment will actually fall over half of 1 per cent. In short, what they have disguised in the budget is that this year, on average there will be fewer people working than were working even last year, and last year the number of employed fell 3.5 per cent.

I would have simply asked the Minister whether he felt it was being honest with the Canadian public to gloss over the fact that the Government is not increasing employment this year as the budget would imply with the word "recovery". They anticipate that employment will fall this year, not go up. I notice the Minister is walking out of the House. I only hope that he is unemployed in the not too distant future as so many other Canadians are at present.

Perhaps we lose sight sometimes in these debates of how grossly inaccurate the Government has been with respect to what future it holds out to the Canadian public. It was not that long ago, in November 1981, that we in the House heard the budget of the then Minister of Finance, commonly referred to as the November 18, 1981 budget of the Minister of Finance. It may be wise for the record to remember what we were told