

Employment and Immigration

concern in this amendment. I am registering the fact that the provinces make up a part of the whole. I am registering concern about the fact that, as I have been hearing throughout my short tenure in office here, the provinces have been shafted by the government regarding federalism. I want to come to grips with this matter. We are not spending money here, and we are not doing anything that the minister has not done before.

I see you are about to rise, Mr. Speaker. Let me just say that I hope I have convinced the minister, and that he, in his wisdom and knowledge that this is the proper and correct motion in terms of trying to put in writing what he is already doing, will come to that conclusion and say that he is thankful to the opposition for having the forthrightness, wisdom and experience to bring in an amendment such as this one for the edification of hon. members.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) was allowed some leeway with regard to his general observations on the intent of the proposed motion. The question before the House is, of course, a procedural one as to whether or not the introduction into clause 5, which gives the minister the authority which he requires to operate in the capacities anticipated in the statute, of an obligation upon the minister to consult with the provinces before the establishment of programs is procedurally correct. I see the hon. member for Nickel Belt (Mr. Rodriguez) is seeking the floor. If it is on the procedural question, I will hear him.

Mr. John Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): In your original remarks when you dealt with this amendment, Mr. Speaker, you said you felt it introduced something new that was not already there in the clause. Indeed, we were well aware of the fact that there was nothing in effect with respect to consultation with the provinces. The government was very well aware of it when we dealt with the bill in committee and when it introduced in the House an amendment changing the minimum attachment period from 8 weeks to 12 weeks. Then the government grabbed its skirts, ran out and brought in its original approach to the minimum attachment period.

In effect, there was no consultation with the provinces when the government decided to change the attachment period from 8 weeks to 12 weeks. There was a hurried consultation after the fact so as to get the government off the horns of the dilemma when Liberal backbenchers from Atlantic Canada started their revolt against the change from 8 weeks to 12 weeks. I think there was more consultation with the Liberal backbench members from Atlantic Canada than meaningful consultation with the provinces regarding the effect on their welfare programs of the change from an 8 weeks to 12 weeks minimum attachment period.

Quite frankly, the amendments themselves are quite meaningless. Who is not in favour of consultation? Surely it is only logical that there should be consultation. Our party has no objection to consulting. One of the things we hear today in

Canada with regard to the unity question is that we should have a closer relationship with the provinces, that we should draw them in and have meaningful consultations with them. As I say, we have no objection to that. The amendment proposes consultation, and if there is one thing the government needs, it is to consult more with those who will be affected by the legislation which they intend to bring before the House.

The minister consistently told us in committee that he had been consulting and these amendments were the result of his consultations. So in effect he has admitted that there is nothing wrong with the amendment proposed by my colleague, the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander). Therefore, I see the amendment as being germane. It puts into writing what the minister said in committee and outside committee with regard to the close relationship with the provinces respecting manpower training centres.

The minister was telling us how much consultation, cohesion and interaction there is between manpower training programs and provincial programs for unemployment. So, in effect, I see this amendment as being very germane to the whole question. If the federal government intends to implement manpower programs, there should be meaningful consultation. Indeed, it is only common sense that the government should consult with the provinces and their educational authorities. Right now there is consultation with the provincial departments of education and local government authorities with respect to manpower programs so far as community colleges are concerned and the kinds of programs that are being offered by those institutions. So there is consultation. I do not see anything new about this. I think there is certainly a place in this clause for such an amendment calling on the minister to put his action where his mouth is.

Mr. Walter Baker (Grenville-Carleton): Mr. Speaker, I want to speak briefly on the procedural aspect. I cannot add to the eloquence of my friend, the hon. member for Hamilton West (Mr. Alexander) with respect to the purpose of the amendment. I gather there is some question in your mind as to the scope of the amendment and whether, having regard to the nature of the bill and the parameters set forth by the legislation, the amendment is in order. Bearing in mind that the amendment puts a requirement on the minister to consult with the provinces and to enter into agreements with any province or group, and the fact that it is widely assumed in the country that all the bill does is to deal with the rights of people and methods by which they may acquire certain rights to unemployment insurance, I think it should be pointed out that the bill goes far beyond that.

The essence of the bill, as set forth in its preamble, is to establish a department of employment and immigration, the Canada employment and immigration commission and the Canada employment and immigration advisory council, and to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act. The main purpose is the establishment of a department of government and agencies within the department. Clause 3 establishes that. Clause 4 sets up the appointment of a deputy minister and an associate