

Government Orders

a reality in the north and have been for some time. The government does not seem to be concerned at all.

The northern economy is not producing enough jobs to meet the demands of the number of people entering the wage economy. Communities do not have a base for employment.

In the underdeveloped communities education and skill levels are low and correspondingly so are average incomes. The dilemma facing aboriginal people in these communities, however, is that even if education and skill levels were developed higher, there is a lack of viable employment opportunities in their communities. We need economic development. We need more and better education, more and better training, educational training that is appropriate for the north, and training that supports the mixed economies of the underdeveloped communities that still rely a great deal on the traditional hunting and trapping activities.

Programs developed in the south by southerners most often do not work in the north. This view was recently echoed in the report last month of the Special Committee on the Northern Economy, a committee of the legislative assembly for the Northwest Territories. As this report points out, the north needs programs and policies that are tailor-made to the north's unique requirements. Many federal programs and transfer agreements do not respond to northern needs, either because they are poorly targeted, designed for other areas of the country and then adapted to the north, or because they contain too many strings.

The report states that in terms of economic development these federal programs and transfer agreements are often counterproductive. The report recommends that the federal transfer agreements and the programs be reviewed so that they support rather than work against economic development initiatives.

Canada employment programs are included on the list of programs requiring review. All adult education and training programs are recommended for review. A major restructuring is required.

Rather than finding ways to remove northerners from the unemployment insurance rolls, the government should be directing its efforts toward increasing employment opportunities and economic development in the north. Assistance in alleviating the northern housing

crisis and providing more affordable day care would go a long way toward assisting people who are willing to work but cannot because of circumstances beyond their control.

Unemployment insurance is an important income support for many communities in the north. It puts food on the table. It helps people buy the equipment and supplies they need to hunt, trap, and fish which supplement their wages and provides additional food for their families.

In conclusion, the changes to the unemployment insurance system contained in this bill will force more people on to welfare and social assistance. The territorial and provincial governments will have this additional burden. The territorial government will have to absorb this burden at a time when the federal government is threatening to reduce the formula funding to the territorial government.

We have no assurance that significant training dollars will go to the north. It is very possible that the dollars saved by the government in reducing our northern workers' benefit entitlement period will be used to train southern workers who will subsequently come north to work.

This bill hurts the north and northern workers. For this reason I oppose it.

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (South Shore): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have an opportunity to stand and speak on third reading of this bill, a debate that seems to have been going on now for several months.

It is my view that Bill C-21 and the new approach to unemployment insurance that is part of this bill are going to be good for Canada. They are going to be good for Nova Scotia. In my opinion they are going to be good for the people of the South Shore whom I have the honour to represent in this House.

I find it amazing and have found it amazing during the short year that I have been a member of this House how there seems to be an approach frequently taken that if an idea emanates from the government in the opinion of those opposite it is automatically deemed to be a bad idea and an unacceptable one. I never understand why we cannot have a more constructive approach, not only to legislation but to the government of this country.