

Employment Strategy

Mr. Atkey: As I have already indicated, it will be a program to increase the ability of the private sector to employ young people who make up nearly half of our unemployed in Canada. We will also be putting forward plans to assist the non-profit voluntary sector. In other areas this group has shown a tremendous degree of skill and tenacity as displayed in the refugee program. The same voluntary sector will have an opportunity to hire young people to carry out environmental and other important community needs projects under the national youth service corps. Finally, I will be taking measures in the very near future to strengthen our training programs to help the private sector eliminate the bottleneck in overcoming the skill shortages which, frankly, are a legacy from the previous government.

One thing I want to assure all members is that we will be achieving more jobs, and I will say it three times—jobs, jobs, jobs at less cost, cost, cost.

Our programs are not going to fritter away the funds on jobs that are here today and gone tomorrow, like the will o' the wisp in the middle of the night. We are going to replace the employment impact of the former hodge-podge of Liberal programs with a smaller number of programs, better designed to do the job. In particular they will be designed to stimulate the creation of profitable and continuing jobs in the private sector for our unemployed young people. The way in which we have gone about the reorientation of Canada Works, which the hon. member spent a portion of his time discussing today, is a good example of the sort of approach that I have in mind. I am the first to admit that in previous periods there were isolated instances where Canada Works had its successes. But it has been an unnecessarily expensive and wasteful way of trying to create artificial jobs for Canadians.

What Canadians want is not jobs that average 30 weeks, which is the experience under Canada Works. They want jobs that last, not jobs that disappear with the government funds that supported and created them in the first place or created dependency upon provincial or municipal governments. Canadians want solid, long-term job creation, not the kind that disappears and leads people right back to unemployment insurance. We will get rid of that vicious cycle of government job creation back to UI and then back to government job creation. That is a vicious cycle, Mr. Speaker, which destroys the very creative soul of our young people in Canada.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Atkey: The opposition seems to ask why the program was not in place the day we took office. Where was your program on June 4, they ask. They know perfectly well why it was not in place.

Mr. Fox: This is December 6, six months later.

Mr. Atkey: Hon. members know why it will be in place next week. Hon. members will know why it took six months to put it together. One cannot streamline and rationalize overnight a large hodge-podge of old programs, and a few sensible ones I

[Mr. Atkey.]

confess. To turn programs around and point them in the right direction takes time, thought and planning.

I want to pay a particular tribute to officials in the Canada Employment Immigration Commission for their willingness to innovate and to respond to a philosophical direction that will put this country back in the right direction.

The program was not put together overnight, but it is put together. The important thing is that it will be done right.

An hon. Member: That will be a change.

Mr. Atkey: That is why we decided rather early on in Canada Employment and Immigration that we had no choice but to go ahead with some of the plans of the previous government, particularly to mount a further Canada Works program, on a limited basis albeit. We knew that it would not be possible to have major new youth programs operating right away, although we were comforted by the fact that there were some youth programs operating then, some effectively and some ineffectively. We decided to use the plans of the previous government as a temporary bridging device from the old to the new.

I am happy to be able to say, however, that we simply did not repeat the old Canada Works program with all its unnecessary expenditures and abuses. We deliberately chose to restrict the temporary and final phase of Canada Works to those parts of the country with the highest unemployment, the highest labour surplus rates. Hon. members opposite know that. They know the areas of greatest need. It is no secret that the constituencies of greatest need and highest unemployment are not represented by members supporting the government. Nevertheless, the money was put where the people needed it the most.

All constituencies with a labour surplus rate of over 9 per cent are receiving Canada Works funds. Any constituency with unemployment rates below that rate are receiving no funds at all. I hardly need point out that this is a very different practice from that of the previous government. In earlier phases of Canada Works large areas of the country which had relatively low unemployment rates nevertheless received funds to stimulate a temporary job creation.

Saskatchewan and Alberta had seasonally adjusted unemployment rates of 4.1 and 3.9 respectively, yet they still received substantial funding under the arrangements of the Liberal government. This was not only unnecessary, it was wasteful and in many instances it was pernicious. The city of Edmonton—I have nothing against Edmonton; I am very fond of that city—had an unemployment rate of less than 3 per cent. It received \$600,000 in Canada Works funds under the Liberal government from 1978 to 1979. It is extremely difficult to understand why in an area where labour is in short supply the previous government would insist upon stimulating the demand for labour. It is pushing where one should be pulling. That is exactly what the previous government did. In many areas of the country where unemployment was either moderate or low the previous government used Canada Works