

Routine Proceedings

• (1230)

Today we heard a report, and we read a report that \$400 million was once again going to be squeezed out of unemployed Canadians for training. Between 1984 and 1988 this government cut total funding for job training from \$2.2 billion to \$1.6 billion. Last year alone it cut \$100 million from the Canadian Jobs Strategy.

If you want to speak about global competitiveness, if you want to speak about responsibility in a global environment, then this government should take note of the fact that while our competitors are increasing their total commitment to training, in Canada, federal training expenditures have gone from .24 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product in 1984-85 to .17 per cent in 1989-90.

Finally, we are certainly not going to buy the cosmetic veneer of the government on the issue of training. We are not going to buy the falsehoods presented on the issue of helping young people. From 1985 to 1990, the budget for SEED, the Summer Employment Experience Development program, was cut in half from \$150 million to \$77 million. Those are not figures that are often cited by the Minister of Employment and Immigration.

I ask the minister how these practices are helping Canadian workers adjust to the changing skill requirements. How are these practices helping Canadian students acquire the education they need to compete against the rest of the world?

If we are serious about global competitiveness, if we are serious about building an agenda for prosperity, then we must act on it. This government talks a good game but at the end of the day it is clear that it has abdicated its responsibility to training and education.

The minister speaks about co-operation between business, labour and government while his government is in the process of withdrawing from the field of training. That is contradictory. It emphasizes the essential problem that this government has. The problem is that it lacks a coherent approach to training and education. If the Conservatives had a coherent approach, they would realize that there is a relationship between a tax on books and the problem of illiteracy. They would realize that putting a 3 per cent tax on students makes education less accessible, more difficult to acquire. They would realize that when university students are studying in overcrowded classrooms, using antiquated materials and

outdated texts, the education one is getting is not the very best.

Instead of seriously attacking the crisis in skills training and education, this government continues to offer Canadians half-baked plans like the program we see today. It uses the money that it has squeezed out of unemployed Canadians for this. For those individuals who really need our help, this government allocates an amount that does not even begin to reverse the damages that it has done.

I also want to draw from an article that appeared in the *The Toronto Star* of October 24, 1991, I believe. Of the additional moneys, the \$400 million allocated today, half of that would simply make up for the \$200 million cut over the past two years from the government's Canadian Jobs Strategy.

This is the same government that parades throughout Canada advocating the wisdom of training, education and world-class economy.

If one is serious about it, then one should be committed to it. Today it has demonstrated it has absolutely no commitment in the area of education and training. It is only willing to do it by raising premiums. It is only willing to do it with employers, employees and unemployed Canadians, but it is not willing to participate in a responsible and dignified manner in helping those people who elected this government and this House to help them.

Therefore, I am not at all happy, as I am sure many unemployed Canadians are not happy. I am sure many Canadians feel cheated by this government that has decided to enter the new era of global competitiveness, but it does not have a clue how to become competitive in a global competitive marketplace.

I will take just one last minute to wrap up. I would just like to say that the time has come to act. The government has had seven years. The time has come to be serious. The time has come to stop tricking Canadians. The time has come to put your money where your mouth is so that we can build a prosperous Canada.

Ms. Joy Langan (Mission—Coquitlam): Mr. Speaker, I want to say that a little ways back in his speech, the hon. member who just spoke before me asked some pretty provocative questions about where the training is for a number of categories of young Canadians. I think those