

Government Orders

Let us be practical. Let us use one practical example. When the government changed the UI legislation, it made it nearly impossible for people who were not UI recipients to receive training.

• (1300)

If you are an aboriginal youth leaving school somewhere between grade eight and grade eleven and you seek out a training opportunity and you are asked about your UI, you do not have an opportunity for UI because you have never had an opportunity for a job. How do you get into the system?

There are several training projects in downtown Winnipeg which were effectively reaching the aboriginal youth which have had to change their focus to find UI recipients. The government is leading itself away from the problem because it will not finance the proper servicing.

Rumours abound and the government hints it is going to have great new training programs and so forth. The reality is every month that passes, someone else misses an opportunity to be trained to enter the labour force. Projections in the 1990s are that one of four entrants in the western Canadian labour market is going to be an aboriginal youth.

How can you train a labour force that cannot access the training programs? It is a phenomenal problem that nobody wishes to discuss. If you are not trained, you cannot get an entry level job. What are you going to end up doing? You do not have to be a genius to figure out that you pick up a stereo some place and go sell it some other place. You do not have to be a genius to figure that you will become involved in break and enters, stealing bicycles or whatever.

If you have to feed yourself, you have to feed yourself or you enter into prostitution. Let us be practical. If there is not an opportunity to earn an income legitimately, people have to stay alive somehow and one of the options they choose, unfortunately, is criminal activity. Rather than dwell upon the criminal activity, the organization of government should be dwelling upon the reality that we are not reaching out.

This gives us an opportunity to comment on one other problem. The government has responded to a longstanding request to have an office of correctional investigator

with authority to initiate investigations rather than take them at the request of offenders.

I wanted to say it is this sort of opportunity missed that makes this legislation so weak. Here we have a public problem. We all treat it as a public problem. We are discussing it in Parliament. We have an opportunity to open it up, to have people approach an investigator with specific complaints, and the government pulls away from the public dimension and makes it solely a person who reports to the Solicitor General. This is an opportunity lost to make the public more aware of some of the concerns of the Solicitor General and of an investigator.

Our party has worked on this since the mid-1970s. We were hoping that this particular legislation would be an opportunity to make it an officer reporting to Parliament. That way we could, from time to time with a committee, hear about these issues firsthand and make it a little bit simpler for the public to get involved.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I would like to advise the House that we have now completed five hours of debate at third reading of Bill C-36. We will now continue with 10-minute speeches which will not be followed by the usual period of questions or comments.

Mr. Chris Axworthy (Saskatoon—Clark's Crossing): Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that there are serious problems of crime in Canada, serious concerns Canadians have about the level of criminal activity and real concerns on the part of those who have been unfortunate enough to be victims of crimes. Their concerns, interest and views are not being considered.

Once the government decided to look at the question of the detention of offenders and the release of offenders, one would have thought that the government would have looked at how best to solve the problems of criminal activity and that the government would have asked what causes criminal activity and how best it can prevent it.

Instead, the government has pursued its normal route which is not to look to prevention, but to look to what we do after criminal activity takes place and look to ways we might deter criminal activity, not by any mechanisms of prevention, but by mechanisms of punishment; not by asking what we can do to ensure our society is better for people so that they do not turn to criminal activity, but to blame them and punish them if they do turn to criminal activity.