

Alleged Failure of Employment Policies

doing about the lack of education classes? That is another question which was asked. I wish to tell hon. members that 43 per cent of our trainees have grade eight or less at enrolment time.

Mr. Broadbent: Forty-three per cent of the labour force?

Mr. MacEachen: Forty-three per cent of our trainees have grade eight or less when they enter the courses, yet the hon. lady said we did nothing in this field, or words to that effect. We are aware that there are people in the labour force who, to use the current expression, may be functionally illiterate—they cannot read or write; they cannot perform the elementary functions that are required to learn a trade or indeed even to get a job. We do our best and we recognize and are exploring this field more and more. We are penetrating it. We cannot fully replace the general educational system in the long term. We try to supplement it in the short term.

• (4:40 p.m.)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Order, please. I regret I have to interrupt the minister, but his time has expired.

Some hon. Members: Carry on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard): Does the House give unanimous consent?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, does the minister not have 30 minutes?

Mr. MacEachen: I thank the House for giving me a chance to finish my remarks. I will try to complete them as quickly as possible. We do attempt to get into the least schooled portion of the population.

Mr. Broadbent: Will the minister permit a question? It is a factual point on which he has made a mistake. I heard the minister say that 43 per cent of the Canadians taking departmental courses have grade eight education or less. Should that statistic not be 43 per cent of the Canadian labour force over the age of 17 have grade eight education or less?

Mr. MacEachen: No, Mr. Speaker. If I must correct the statistic I will do so later, but my understanding about the course is that 43 per cent of our trainees have grade eight education or less on enrolment. In 1968-69, for

[Mr. MacEachen.]

example, we trained approximately 22,000 workers who have less than grade six education. About three weeks ago a young man in his twenties came to see me. Although he was employed as a cook, he could not read nor write. He told me how he managed to follow recipes and develop new ones. It was rather interesting, but laborious. He wants to be upgraded. This is a big problem for the federal and provincial governments. We are trying to get into this area even more than we are at the present time.

I wish to make the point, Mr. Speaker, that we do not want these training courses to become welfare schools. It is a temptation for individuals in low-income areas to take the training because of the allowance. This is not a long-term solution to their problems. Nothing will do more to discredit this program than if it is understood that it is a substitute for welfare or if it happens that trainees who complete these courses do not take jobs or improve their incomes.

Mr. Lundrigan: Mr. Speaker, as there are only 15 minutes left in today's sitting, I wonder if the minister will permit a question at this time. I have been sitting here listening to him for half an hour. I am sure when the minister reads his speech he will be impressed to learn how long he can speak without getting down to the nitty-gritties. Can the minister indicate what new initiatives are being taken by his department in view of the fact that we have a chronic unemployment situation and that right now we have university students by the thousand? In view of the fact that his budget has been increased, is his department going to take new initiatives or will we be having a little more of the same? I would like the minister to get around to this point.

Mr. MacEachen: I do not need any help from the hon. member in making my speech because I know his help is not well-intentioned. His question is based on the fact that he is impressed with the rather important contribution the department is making. If he thought I was wasting time, he would not want me to change the nature of my speech.

This year my department is spending \$273 million, a good deal of it in the Atlantic provinces. There will be hundreds of thousands of trainees. Surely it is a matter of important debate in this House to know whether this money is being spent effectively. I know perfectly well if we do not do a good job and relate these efforts to the economy, earnings