

*Employment Tax Credit Act*

● (1730)

*[English]*

**Mr. Axworthy:** Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the hon. member for a very interesting and good address. It is nice to hear a positive contribution and one that has some relevance to the bill which is under debate. I would simply say that the budget amount which we announced when we introduced the bill is \$98 million for this year, which is about the same amount we spent last year. We had hoped that the number of participants under the program would be in the same range of about 50,000.

The reason for keeping it at the same level is that it is simply an extension of the bill while we are reviewing the other programs. We have taken other moneys that were available for tax credits and put them into the—

**Mr. Hawkes:** Mr. Chairman, I have a point of order. Surely, the minister realizes that it is incorrect to talk about a budget. This is a tax credit, and it does not appear in the budget figures. It is not—

**The Deputy Chairman:** Order, please. If I understand the question of the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean, it was with regard to allocations for certain projects. Therefore, I think it is proper to talk about budget expenditures.

**Mr. Axworthy:** Mr. Chairman, this is getting to be humorous. The reason for continuing the program at the same level was because we wanted to shift the allocations that were under the estimates into the area of direct job creation.

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Chairman, I want to make a few comments and ask the minister a couple of questions. Nobody has a monopoly on the concern, which we all must share in the crisis that we have, over unemployment and other related problems of the economy. I agree with the minister that there is not one simple solution to this serious problem. However, we on this side differ from this government in the approach. The former government attempted to create jobs of a more permanent nature. This government has gone back to the grand mentality which emerged in the early 1970s where it makes money available to keep people working for three or four months so that they can qualify for unemployment insurance. I realize, though, that there must be such a program, especially when the economy has been mismanaged as badly as it has, not only by Canada—but by other countries as well.

Has the minister or his department been involved in discussions with the provincial governments with regard to this whole area of manpower training? It is quite obvious to me, as it is to many Canadians today, that there is something fundamentally wrong with our primary and secondary education processes. We are keeping our young people in school far too long, and this has a twofold effect. When we keep young people in school for 13 years—I am talking particularly about young people who are motivated at the ages of 15, 16 or 17 toward some kind of a job skill—to prepare them for a career,

they are bored to death. This system provides nothing more than a babysitting service.

As a result, we are graduating from our schools today armies of young people with no job skills and who have lost all their motivation toward a certain trade skill. Because the education process has been disrupted, we have academic mediocrity as well. Is it not high time that the various governments get together and work out a program?

Indeed, the educational program in the province of Ontario provides for such a scheme in which young people are offered a training position in industry. They are offered the opportunity to leave school at grade nine or ten, find a place in industry—not at \$9 per hour, but at \$1.50 per hour because they are continuing to learn a trade and a skill. This learning experience within the industry would be supplemented with training, perhaps one day a week or one week a month, in one of the colleges or secondary schools in the country.

The minister will readily recognize that what I have described is the European system. There is a model of that system functioning in Ottawa right now, and the academic portion of it will run into September. The question is, have there been any discussions with the provinces to address this very fundamental problem, which will help to prepare us for the 1980s and, indeed, for the next century when we will need highly skilled people to work at highly technical jobs?

I would also like to know if there have been any discussions with the unions and the industries and whether these two groups are concerned about this problem. We cannot expect the federal government to find a solution to what is probably the most crucial problem facing our country today, particularly as it refers to youth unemployment. It is a problem which no single agency can solve by itself. It is a problem which requires the input of the federal government, the provincial governments, the industries and, of course, the workers' organizations, before an agreement can be reached.

Can the minister enlighten us as to whether he is concerned as well about these matters, whether there are any discussions going on and whether he has read some of the studies which have been produced by some of my colleagues, by educators in the country, and so on? What does the minister see for the future with regard to the combination of manpower training and job creation, which are two areas for which his department is responsible?

**Mr. Axworthy:** Mr. Chairman, the hon. member has put his finger on what is really one of the critical employment questions in this country, one that we hope to address by the establishment of the parliamentary committee which would be specifically looking at the issue of a critical need for skills in Canada and at a way in which we can supply them. In the meantime, I have met with the provincial ministers of employment and immigration and discussed this very topic.

We also discussed what we should be doing about the revision of the Adult Occupational Training Act. As the hon. member knows, we put over \$800 million into that act. Many of the provincial ministers have indicated that they would like