

ment should do the same in respect of language training when such training is directly related to ability to work in the cities where these people live. I hope I have made my point, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to say a few words on this bill introduced by the minister. In his opening remarks the minister said, and I think I quote him accurately, that by no stretch of the imagination could this bill be regarded as a major overhaul of the legislation. I agree with him in that regard. He also said there had been consultations with the provinces regarding the bill. I wonder whether during these consultations the minister considered the fact that when the time period is reduced from three years to one year there will be a tremendous need for additional space.

The time period should always have been one year and should never have been changed by this government. When the time stipulation was increased to three years in the labour force, senior members of the Salvation Army and other groups condemned this action by the government. In my own area the participation rate in trades training schools is very high and I doubt that more people can be handled under the program. I hope this situation will be improved by the construction of a new school.

I am pleased to see the minister in his position as Minister of Manpower. I know he will be a pleasant change from his stone-faced and stone-hearted predecessor who never came down from his ivory tower, never knew how to smile and, I assume, never knew what it was to be unemployed. He had no compassion whatsoever for the unemployed or those who required assistance. This is typical of many members on the government benches; they do not seem to realize these problems. I cannot say that about the present minister, who has always been most co-operative and willing to work with all members of the House. I speak from experience. I have found him to be that way and I look forward to his bringing in further changes in the future. I think I have said enough nice things about the minister for the moment and now it is time to criticize him a little.

Like the hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate—I should say the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan) because the former hon. member for Bonavista-Twillingate now occupies a well-padded position which I hope he continues to occupy. As I was about to say, like the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate I commend the previous deputy minister for doing such a good job. I congratulate the new deputy minister and hope he will weigh his statements and not make them off the top of his head. I have in mind, particularly, statements in reference to problems of unemployment insurance and benefits.

I realize this subject is not related to the bill before us, but I hope the new deputy minister will not continue to blame all the difficulties on the applicants rather than the drafters of certain measures. I hope he will not speak as wildly in future as he has in the past, without knowing the facts. Those of us who have been members for some time are aware that 10 or 12 people would call each day complaining about not receiving unemployment insurance benefits. The fact was that they had not received benefits for weeks and sometimes months.

Adult Occupational Training Act

Bill C-195 is a pathetic attempt to improve the operations of the Manpower training program. It does right a few wrongs and accomplishes a few housekeeping chores, but it leaves the bulk of the program as ineffective as it is now. As I understand it, there are five basic changes proposed in Bill C-195. First, the bill proposes to remove the current restrictions which require people to serve three years in the labour force or to be supporting dependants in order to receive an allowance. In future, people who have been out of school a total of 12 months, not necessarily uninterrupted, will be eligible to receive an allowance. Second, the bill provides that provincial training costs to be paid by the federal government will be specified in advance through a contract. Currently, the federal government merely picks up the tab in arrears.

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Third, the bill would allow the federal government to enter into a contract for a training course with a group or association of employers rather than merely one employer. Fourth, the bill proposes to do away with the restrictions against on-the-job training, as the Economic Council of Canada, the Progressive Conservative party and many other critics have long been advocating. Finally, the bill would allow the payment of less than the specified amounts for allowances to persons without dependants.

Really, the only two important changes are those concerning the removal of restrictions on allowances and on in-industry training programs. These changes are long overdue. For the rest, the bill is a great disappointment. These changes are not sufficient to improve the program substantially. Low income, poorly educated Canadians, particularly in rural areas and in the outlying districts of Canada, will be no better off when this bill is passed than they are now. Many reputable groups have complained that the manpower training program has important limitations which restrict the role of the program in reducing poverty. The report of the Special Senate Committee on poverty emphasized the inadequacy of the program's effect on poverty. I quote from that report at page 150:

The federal manpower programs, like other national economic development programs, have . . . only limited relevance to the poverty question. They are not and cannot be evaluated in terms of the direct contribution they make to poverty reduction or elimination.

Similarly, the report of the federal task force on agriculture in 1969 complained as follows:

The role (of manpower training programs) in reducing the numbers of farm poor . . . appears limited. The best hope is that manpower programs will provide good non-farm alternatives to younger operators, to the sons of marginal farmers and to other rural youth who are ill equipped to become modern farmers. . . . But it is unrealistic to look for any great impact in the ranks of the middle-aged who make up a high percentage of the farm poverty sector today.

Even to reach younger operators poses problems. For example most training courses require at least grade 10 standing.

In contrast to these realistic appraisals of the impact of the manpower training program on poverty, we have the self-congratulatory pose adopted by the former minister of manpower—I emphasize that this is the former minister and not the present minister—who said in his report on the 1970 operations of the Canada Manpower training program that it—