

Alleged Failure of Employment Policies

thousands of immigrants every year who come here to settle? Is it discriminatory to offer them training for a period of six months to enable them to learn one of the two official languages of the country, thus providing them with an opportunity to better understand the new society? This policy has been devised by the department of manpower. Is it discriminatory to work out arrangements with our Indian people, in spite of all the difficulties resulting from arrangements made by other departments which perhaps do not permit such a quick approach to that type of training as one might wish, particularly in view of the weaknesses the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby indicated this morning? I think there is no question about that.

When it comes to the manpower policy of any nation, we are speaking of the philosophy underlying the approach to the development of human relations in a nation. Therefore, it provides a background against which dialogue and debate will take place as to priorities and techniques. Of course, because of this, this is one of those policies which lends itself to criticism no matter what approach you are going to take. There will never be sufficient resources in the minds of politicians when it comes to the allocation of funds for the development of the human resources of a nation.

● (2:50 p.m.)

I understand that \$250 million was spent last year for the development of human resources in our country. This is three times the amount spent during the last year of the previous program, and has permitted thousands of people to be brought into a scheme of retraining. The program has increased the average earnings of trainees in one year by \$16 a week over the amount they earned prior to receiving training. According to statistics, almost 85 per cent of those retrained were able to find employment right after receiving their training. Whereas 55 per cent of the trainees previously were unemployed, after training only 15 per cent could be considered to be still unemployable. So, this program has brought about a sharp decrease in the percentage of those unemployed. Is this inefficiency, as has been suggested by the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby? Would an increase of \$16 a week in the earning capacity of the trainees and a reduction in the unemployment figure from 55 per cent down to 15 per cent, be the result of an inefficient approach to manpower training?

What is the meaning of the big words used by the hon. member? These words should be

[Mr. Caccia.]

accompanied, of course, by some selective explanations. In every system of such a broad scope there will be built-in weaknesses and there will be certain examples of problems and inaccuracies on the part of the administrative arm. But this is no reason to totally condemn the program. The criticism, of course, becomes useful when it helps the administrative arm detect and rectify the weaknesses. I presume that in his criticism of ineffective manpower policies the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby included a lack of imagination. If so, then this should be corroborated by facts. Our experience has been to the contrary. We have seen instances in which the manpower policies have been adopted with a substantial degree of flexibility and imagination. I might cite the following examples.

In winter time there usually is a greater number of men belonging to labourers unions who are unemployed. A year ago representatives of a labourers' union approached manpower people and asked what could be done during the idle winter period to retrain some of their members. A scheme was devised whereby over a period of 12 or 16 weeks—I am not sure of the exact period—these men were upgraded within their own trades from a totally unskilled level to what one might describe as a semi-skilled or higher level. The scheme not only was successful but was repeated this winter. I would agree with the hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby if he means—as I did not understand him to mean—that perhaps our manpower policies should be aimed more intensively at training people who are already employed in order to bring them to their full potential. In this way vacancies would be created at the lower unskilled and semi-skilled levels in which there are large numbers of unemployed people and members of our labour force would be moved up as their potential permitted. If this were the hon. member's suggestion, personally, I would agree with him. This is a highly desirable objective in respect of Canadian policy or the policy of any nation.

There is the question of whether the resources of the manpower department should be devoted to this end or merely to the retraining of unemployed people or divided between the two programs. I presume that would be a difficult decision for any department or any minister to make. This, however, is not what the hon. member suggested. He condemned the whole system and described it as discriminatory and ineffective. If one takes