

Employment Tax Credit Act

There are also major commitments under the regional economic expansion programs. The Northlands agreements which are in place in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, parts of Alberta and the Northwest Territories have introduced major work programs for native people. Manitoba has spent close to \$26 million per year under its Northlands agreement which is almost entirely allocated to economic development programs for native people. This is the case in the other provinces as well, so DREE has a major commitment to economic development for native people.

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has also set funds aside, not only for support of the reserves but also for capital investment and economic development within the reserve structure.

A number of programs are available, but perhaps they have not been co-ordinated or focused on specific problems. We may need to take a different strategic approach to the problem. Perhaps it would be a good idea to consolidate the programs and concentrate large amounts of capital on specific economic development areas.

Two years ago the federal cabinet set up a consultative committee which has been meeting with the provinces and native organizations to develop new economic development approaches. I believe it is close to developing certain ideas which this government will implement.

Progress has been made in a number of areas but it cannot be expected that hundreds of years of abuse, grievance and neglect will be corrected in two, three or five years. It is necessary that this House agree that this is the number one priority for Canada. If that is agreed, then perhaps it is worth debating whether there should be a full-scale mobilization of our resources in that area. However, that would be telling other groups—young people and women, for example—that money cannot be put into their employment or economic development program. There is a wide variety of competing interests and groups which feel they have the right to special consideration, but with reasonably scarce resources and budgets, it is impossible to satisfy all needs at the same time.

I think the hon. member's sentiments are correct and his assessment of the condition of native people is accurate. It is something that I share but I think we need more dialogue about how to make use of resources in excess of \$10 million—perhaps in terms of hundreds of millions of dollars. If we commit more resources to these programs, are we prepared to withdraw them from other people or interests? That is a topic which is worthy of debate but I would say this is not the time or place for that debate. It should be given more time than is available for debate on this bill.

I should like to say to the hon. member that I would welcome his comments when my estimates come before the committee. Also, his colleague, the hon. member for Winnipeg North, is a member of a task force assigned to examine the new employment opportunities and demands for the next decade and ways in which the government should respond to them. I believe they will begin hearings shortly. Parliamentari-

ans and interest groups may appear before them and I welcome their contributions so that we may have the benefit of their experience with this very critical problem. It is precisely to deal with this problem that the task force was established. For the same reason the department is undertaking an evaluation of its programs in order to ensure that they meet the severe and special needs which exist in the country. My department hopes to present a paper to Parliament in the late fall or early next year. I hope we can then have a full-scale debate on the questions which the hon. member has raised.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Order, please. I am sorry to have to advise the hon. member for Brant that his time has expired. Before I recognize the hon. member for Calgary West again, I have to see other hon. members who are seeking the floor. The hon. member for Kootenay East-Revelstoke.

Mr. Parker: Mr. Chairman, I welcome the opportunity to take part in this debate on Bill C-19, to amend the employment tax credit program. I should like to refer to the minister's comments regarding LEAP funds and the Outreach program. These have been very effective in my area but when I have contacted the minister's office I have been advised that funds for my area have been depleted and that the program cannot continue. That is a very sad thing for a place like Golden where there is no Canada Manpower office. Ten or twelve volunteers must work with one Outreach applicant to help them get employment. I think that such a program should take preference over a tax credit program. I should like to hear the minister's comments on this matter, first of all.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member's remarks confirm the success of the LEAP and Outreach programs. I regret that the funds for his province have already been committed but we have to work within budgetary limits. It must be recognized too that the spending estimates have been established by previous governments and that this government must live within those parameters. I would be prepared, however, to see whether the funding available to the British Columbia region specifically has been fully committed.

I would point out also that I have held commitments to the Outreach program in reserve, in part because I wanted to see whether there was a fair allocation of funds to other constituent groups such as women's organizations and handicapped groups. Some money may possibly be left in that part of the program.

I am not sure whether funds for the LEAP program for the hon. member's region have all been spent. The budget for this year was close to \$70 million, which was a substantial increase over 1978-79 when I believe the budget was \$5.8 million. If the member thinks this is a successful program, then we will examine it carefully when we make our forecast for next year.

Mr. Parker: Referring now to the tax credit program, Mr. Chairman, last week I presented the Minister of Communications with a petition listing 10,000 names protesting cutbacks in employment and the movement of telephone workers into other areas.