

*Employment Tax Credit Act*

bility to create employment, and I think we do, surely the employment that we create out of the public purse should be more clearly targeted on those who need it the most, not those who need it the least. This bill does not do that. It is a "shot gun" bill. It could be that the spouse of somebody who earns \$200,000 a year is given one of these created jobs. There is nothing to prevent that happening.

The minister has chosen, and I think that it is consistent with the government's pattern over the last 12 years, not to provide this House with a data base which, I am sure, exists in his department. This government gave its mandate to this program some two years ago. If one looks at the main estimates one will see tremendous sums of money being spent in the minister's department for research personnel. It is the largest operating department in the government in terms of the number of researchers working within it. I am certain that the minister has in his possession research data on the effectiveness of this program.

We on this side of the House are debating whether or not this piece of legislation should be passed, yet the minister has not seen fit to provide us with the research data base for which the taxpayers of this country have paid. I hope that this situation will change when and if the throne speech promise on freedom of information legislation is brought into reality. However, we have been hearing that promise for close to 12 years and I will not hold my breath until I see the bill before me.

If hon. members had that research data, then what would it tell us about this bill before us? If one looks at the provisions of the bill, there are very limited stipulations to which one must adhere. The people who are hired under the terms of this bill must have been unemployed for two weeks. The employer must sign a declaration that without this program the employer would not have had anyone to fill this job. In other words, the employers are declaring that they are creating a job which is extra to the normal needs of their organization.

I wonder if the research data which the minister must possess suggests to him that not every employer is honest, that some may have signed a false declaration. I wonder if that is a reasonable assumption to make. I wonder if the research data would tell us anything about that situation. I wonder if the research data would tell us clearly how many women and native people are employed under the program and the regions of the country in which this employment is created, so that a decision can be made as to whether or not the provisions of this bill provide for a responsible expenditure of public money. Is the expenditure creating jobs for the target groups and the regions which are of most concern to the members of this House? I suspect the research data would answer these questions if it were provided.

The next aspect of this bill which needs examination is with regard to the fact that it is a tax credit bill. The bill is of no value and is no incentive to an employer unless he or she is in the position of having to pay taxes. If they are in a position of having to pay taxes, then the tax credit is of some use to them. I suggest to hon. members that approximately half the employ-

ers in this country are not affected in any significant way by the provisions of this bill. I suggest to the House that it is that half, the companies which are just starting up and are having to struggle to make a go of it, companies which have not turned the corner, that are most likely to create significant employment in the long term. This bill provides no assistance in that regard. That is a choice which the minister has made.

I bring these matters to the minister's attention, and I have encouraged other members of my caucus to bring their concerns to the attention of the minister. The unemployment situation in Canada is the kind of topic which should be debated at some length. I encourage members on all sides of this House to bring to the attention of the minister their ideas and their suggestions as to what might be done in the long term and the short term to help the Government of Canada and the minister to address this very serious issue.

● (1600)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Dionne, Northumberland-Miramichi):** The hon. member for Welland.

**Mr. Parent:** Mr. Speaker, I very gladly—

**Mr. Knowles:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe it is the custom in this House for the first round of speeches to include one speaker from each party. I do not suggest anything has gone haywire but I gave the Chair the names of those in this party who wish to speak. I hope that the Liberal member who has just risen will not mind yielding to the hon. member for Kootenay East-Revelstoke (Mr. Parker).

**Mr. Parent:** On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the custom that has held for many years and, of course, I agree with it. Naturally I defer to my colleague from the New Democratic Party.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Dionne, Northumberland-Miramichi):** The hon. member for Kootenay East-Revelstoke.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Sid Parker (Kootenay East-Revelstoke):** Mr. Speaker, I have very mixed feelings about the bill which is before us this afternoon. The employment tax credit program was adopted as a temporary program to stimulate employment in the business sector and it has not done a great deal of good. Unemployment has not disappeared from the scene; far from it. Nobody really believed that this program would accomplish that objective, but I suspect that a good many people on the other side of the House expected that it would at least have a minimal impact on the unemployment rolls.

I need not remind hon. members opposite that there are still nearly one million unemployed in Canada today, even though the program has been in effect for over two years. The latest figures I have from the Department of Employment and Immigration indicate that only 50,000 new jobs were created through this program over the past fiscal year. This would mean, Mr. Speaker, that even if there was no growth in the number of unemployed over the next year—not a very likely