

Borrowing Authority

work of a comparable nature or income, if indeed in some parts of the country they can find work at all.

The Government's Bill C-8, the Program for Older Worker Adjustment, sometimes referred to as POWA, implicitly recognizes the inadequacy of current UIC policy to meet the needs of older workers. We are especially concerned that it hinges on provincial ability and willingness to participate. This may offer greater flexibility, but it also encourages disparities. Indeed, some provinces, the Province of Ontario for example, have not completed negotiations with the federal Government. As a result, thousands of older workers in the Province of Ontario are not able to take advantage of the POWA program. Moreover, the total proposed budget for POWA is a mere \$60 million. This means that roughly 6,000 workers can be retrained through the program. Currently 415,000 workers aged 55 to 64 are out of work, but only 100,000 of these are considered officially unemployed. Even 100,000 would not make a dent on those figures in terms of re-training.

If all the money that is available at this time is \$60 million, that would retrain approximately 6,000 workers. In my constituency of Brant alone, as of February of this year, there were 1,318 workers between the ages of 44 and 64 collecting unemployment insurance. More are now on welfare. CEIC does not have a separate figure for those 55 and over in my constituency. There are 200 to 250 older workers from the Massey Combines plant alone still in need of the type of retraining that a POWA program could offer.

I recall a number of years ago when both White Farm Equipment and more recently Massey Combines shut down and went out of business in the farm implement industry. This had a devastating effect on the lives of hundreds, indeed several thousand workers in my constituency. I fought very hard in those days to get the farm implement industry included on the list for older worker retraining. I will say that this Government did come across and added that class of workers to the program. However I do not know how \$60 million is going to go very far toward solving the problem of retraining older workers. For example, in my constituency of Brant, only 30 per cent of older workers who lost their jobs between 1981 and 1984 had found re-employment by January 1986. I do not have current figures, but I strongly suspect that an awful lot of those workers are still looking for

meaningful work that pays a decent wage. They may have part-time work, work that they are not suited for or at lower rates of income. This is extremely disruptive to their personal lives.

We now have a program to be funded with \$60 million; yet in August 1985 the advisory council to the then Minister of Employment and Immigration called for a \$1 billion adjustment program for older workers. This Government came up with a figure of \$60 million. What we should see implemented is a federally controlled and financed program under the UIC Act which would provide an extension of benefits for this group and would apply to all older workers regardless of the cause and nature of their layoff.

I do not know why they have to limit the benefits of retraining to certain industry sectors. Surely if any industry, city or urban community shuts down, closes its doors and throws older workers out of work, they should automatically come under a national federal retraining program. They should not have to go through all the red tape of having to prove that they belong to a certain industry sector and that that industry sector falls under the POWA agreement. It should be for all displaced older workers, not just those in certain designated industries.

Furthermore, we recommend the following for the POWA program: One, incorporate the earnings based benefit formula into POWA with the minimum benefit being two-thirds of an individual's income; two, provincial and employer participation should be guaranteed through legislation if necessary; three, a job protection board should be established to evaluate layoffs, ensure adequate notice and ensure that the terms of POWA are negotiated before layoffs take effect; and four, a levy grant system to ensure employers contribute to training.

In concluding this part of my address this afternoon, I cannot stress too much the significance of retraining programs for men and women in their middle years of employment. It is an absolute shame in a country as rich as ours that people are thrown out of work, their jobs are terminated and they have virtually nowhere to go except initially part-time jobs or lower paying jobs. All this is extremely disruptive to family planning and budgeting to say nothing of the pall of emotional depression that often settles over families and individuals because of the