

offset additional costs, such as transportation, incurred in training.

We will monitor very carefully both the number of women in training and the quality of their training experience to make sure the program becomes even more effective in serving women's employment needs. I can assure this House that we will quickly take any steps needed to achieve this aim.

● (2022)

Over the years, female participation in training programs has increased substantially, to the point where about one-third of the trainees are women. We are, however, not satisfied that women are receiving the types of training that can best improve their opportunities for employment. Too much of the training taken by women is still concentrated in the traditionally female occupations and academic upgrading courses. We want to redress this imbalance to ensure that training leads many more women into satisfactory employment.

The main thrust of recent policy developments in the training program is to improve effectiveness by linking training more directly with skill needs and job opportunities in the labour market. This will benefit all clients—both men and women—who look to training as a way to enhance their employment prospects. And we are taking special steps to ensure that women share equally in these opportunities by reserving places for them in those skill courses in which women have been under-represented.

We believe that the industrial training program, which offers trainees the opportunity to gain work experience as they learn skills directly relevant to the employer's requirements, is particularly valuable for assisting women to enter non-traditional, better-paid occupations. Accordingly, we are placing special emphasis on increasing female participation by setting targets for women. This cannot be done by governments alone. It must be done through the concerted efforts of employers, unions and women themselves. I emphasize "women themselves" because it is they who will provide the impetus, when all is said and done, to bring about the needed improvement in their own status. As full members of the labour force, they must demonstrate the ambition that will justify their promotion to a fair share of the top jobs in the future. They must not hang back from competing for the jobs that were once considered those of men alone.

I would also like to clarify a misconception which appears to exist in the House and elsewhere. Specifically, it has been claimed that women have been dropped as a target group in all our various employment programs. This is not so. In our small Outreach program, however, we decided last year that priority must be given to a number of specific categories of severely disadvantaged and chronically unemployed workers. Severely disadvantaged female workers are certainly included. But women can in no way be considered severely disadvantaged just because they are women. The directive for the Outreach program established priorities for, first, isolated or remote communities; second, native people; third, the chronically unemployed, such as welfare recipients; fourth, the mentally or

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physically handicapped; and fifth, persons who find great difficulty in entering or re-entering the labour force, such as ex-inmates, alcoholics, etc.

Earlier last week the Supreme Court handed down an important decision relating to unemployment insurance and women. I refer to the case of Stella Bliss. Notwithstanding that the Supreme Court has ruled in favour of the government in this case, I have directed a thorough and sympathetic review of the maternity provisions of the Unemployment Insurance Act. When that review is completed, I shall be recommending changes to the cabinet. Because the review will take time, such changes would be the subject of a future bill. My only regret is that it is not possible to include these changes in the bill before the House today.

I have heard arguments that rather than amending the act, all we need do is to tighten up our administration and get rid of the cheaters. This is simplistic, and I must emphasize strongly that stricter administrative controls are no substitute for the package of amendments we are presenting in this bill. We have introduced additional controls and are planning to put others in place.

I want to close on one important note. We are in the House to represent the people of Canada. That is our function. We must ask ourselves, therefore, what it is that the Canadian people expect from their unemployment insurance program. Do they want it to be tightly administered, with a firm but fair hand? Do they want it to be free from work disincentives? Do they want it to do the job it was designed to do—provide temporary financial help to Canadians who are between jobs?

I know the answer to all those questions is "yes". I know it from a continuing series of studies which the unemployment insurance program has commissioned over the last year. These nation-wide studies have told me Canadians strongly support the directions I am proposing. The views they express have hardly changed at all from the first study in September, 1977 to the latest, in September 1978—after I announced the changes to the UI program. I tabled the detailed findings of the first three studies with the Standing Committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration earlier this year, and I am prepared to do the same with the latest.

Whenever the government moves to tighten its administration of a major social program such as this, criticism is to be expected. Informed criticism which is sensitive to the views of Canadians is the lifeblood of parliament. We welcome this sort of constructive comment.

But in considering this bill, I ask the House to consider not only my words and the government's reasons for amending the Unemployment Insurance Act, but to listen to the Canadian people. From the evidence before me, the measures we have proposed are administratively sound and equitable both to those who pay premiums and to those who receive benefits. They will, to an important degree, permit the government to reallocate funds to more positive uses. I know Canadians will approve of this legislation.