

I am not suggesting that we should put a stop to our present program, that we should close down our manpower training centres or that things can be done overnight. But I am urging the minister, to the best of my ability, to look carefully at those things we have accomplished and at those we have not accomplished. I suggest a large number of things we have done have not worked well. I am not saying that they have failed, but they have not worked as well as they might and the money expended on them could have been put to better use.

I suggest we take a serious look at the overwhelming preponderance of spending on institutions—not that we cease doing what we are doing now but that in years to come we turn more to co-operation with industry and labour in our manpower training programs on the job in industry. I further suggest the department take a serious look at my proposal, which I admit is not an original one, that we begin to look at the problem faced by the hard core of people who are at the bottom of the economic and social ladder in this country, those who have been unable to find work and have existed in pretty miserable circumstances on welfare. We should devise programs of training to bring these people into the economic, social and working life of Canada so they can begin to benefit from this great country which has not done what it should have done for these people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order. I appreciate there is a special arrangement, but to keep the record straight I must inform hon. members that if the minister speaks now he will close the debate.

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

Hon. Bryce Mackasey (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, my first remarks are to thank the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan) for his courtesy and his appreciation of the urgency of the matter at hand. May I also thank the hon. member who has a very important private member's bill which he has waited a considerable period of time to introduce. I can picture him seething a little over in the corner, having been through the experience on previous occasions.

I am caught in the dilemma of, on the one hand, being very apprehensive and concerned for the undeniable rights of the private member and, at the same time, being quite conscious of my responsibility to answer many of the intelligent questions that have been raised during this debate. If I do not cover them all in five minutes—because I dare not go beyond that—I hope that when we reach the committee stage we will deal with them in a more specific manner.

As I said at the outset, I thought I had made it clear that I was not introducing what I regarded as the end-all, or a major overhaul of all the legislation of the Department of Manpower but, rather, I had concentrated immediately upon two points that all parties, my provincial counterparts and all responsible groups in the country concerned with the problem of manpower, had zeroed in on, namely, the need for on-the-job training and, second, the need to eliminate the three-year rule. I think the three-year rule served a very useful purpose and was a logical addition to the legislation at the time the bill was first formulated. Its

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purpose then was to direct priority to our senior workers in the work force, those who had lost their skill or had found their skill redundant or obsolete and needed a second skill in order to enable them to finish out their working days.

Times have changed and as the picture of the people who are unemployed has become clearer it has become obvious that those who are really suffering as a result of unemployment at the moment have definite characteristics. They are young, they are undereducated, they are quite often single. In too many instances they have not been part of the work force for long and therefore are unable to meet the three-year requirement. I think we all recognized this, and it has indeed been a tragedy.

All too frequently people become statistics. But they are not statistics; people are flesh and blood and have feelings. There is a tendency at times of high unemployment for the smug majority—the smug majority being those who are lucky to have work—to forget that the unemployed and those on welfare are more than statistics, that they are people who given the opportunity would work rather than remain unemployed, at least with very few exceptions.

What I have attempted to do today, as I made very clear at the outset, is at least to rectify at once one anomaly in the present act that is causing a certain amount of discrimination, unintentionally, against young people, both men and women, and at the same time remove the legal impediment against a permanent on-the-job training program after consultation with the provinces and, of course, the trade unions. This bill will do both these things. It will remove the impediment against young people who need training and it will permit the Department of Manpower to re-establish within the department our priorities in such a way as to give added impetus to on-the-job training, something that we have been unable to do under the present act.

The hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Barnett) a little earlier talked about the need to consult the trade unions. Earlier in my speech I said that I hope to be able next week to talk at length in the budget debate, since I am no longer minister of labour, about some of the responsibilities that the trade unions have to meet their moral and legal obligations to the unfortunate unemployed of this country, especially in the apprenticeship field and the concept of the closed shop.

Much of the impediment to retraining on the job and off the job and to our young people learning a skill arises from the archaic practices of the trade union movement itself. So while it is necessary and obligatory, and very much in line with my own philosophy, in introducing on-the-job training to take into consideration the views of the trade union movement, I am sure that the overwhelming majority of its leaders must and will assume that their co-operation will be needed over the next decade if we are to meet the kind of challenge that this country, with more and more capital-intensive industries, needs to meet.

The Department of Manpower is going through a period of very severe, in-depth appraisal at the present moment. The new deputy minister has already set up a task force to work on unemployment insurance to see how we can best co-ordinate the two items and render the best service