

Labour Conditions

It will serve no purpose to get industry to embark on a scheme of retraining employees if there are no jobs for those employees after they have been retrained. It will serve no purpose to get workers to move from a depressed area to some other place if there are no jobs for them when they get there.

The present government has had a program of vocational and technical retraining under way for the past few years, and I think this program has demonstrated the futility of trying to look after workers who have been deprived of employment as a result of automation and changing technology, without at the same time trying to make sure that there are jobs for them after they have completed their training. The government's vocational and technical training program has so far been largely a failure.

An hon. Member: Nonsense.

Mr. Berger: This is because the workers have no real prospect of employment when they have finished their courses. When I said the government's program of vocational and technical training had been largely a failure, I heard a cry of "nonsense" from the Conservative benches. That is the usual intellectual riposte one gets from those benches.

I want to refer to some statistics which the minister was good enough to supply after certain questions had been placed on the order paper. The government is fond of putting statistics before the house which tell, usually, only one side of the story. For example, government spokesmen tell us that employment has never been higher in Canada—that more people have jobs than ever before. At the same time they decline even to mention, let alone acknowledge, that more people are out of work than ever before, that unemployment is much higher than ever before. These statistics which have been supplied to us in connection with the vocational and technical training program illustrate that the government has fallen into this habit in a congenital way.

According to these figures, between April 1, 1960, to March 31, 1961, there were 2,848 persons who completed vocational and technical training under the government's program. The government was unable to tell us how many of these persons obtained jobs after they had completed their courses and, of course, that is the only standard by which one can judge the success of the program. From April 1, 1961, to March 31, 1962, there were 26,887 persons enrolled in the training and re-training program. Of these, 9,646 completed their courses and 6,569 failed. More

[Mr. Berger.]

than 10,000 were still undergoing training at the time these figures were supplied by the minister, so we can safely conclude on the basis of the department's own figures that more than 40 per cent of those who enrolled in these courses failed to complete them. Once again, for the period in question, the government was unable to tell us how many of these people had obtained jobs.

I heard an interjection a moment ago from the Conservative benches suggesting that those who failed to complete their courses had obtained jobs. The government has been unable to tell us whether any of those who took part in these courses ever got a job, so I find it difficult to accept that suggestion.

Let us take the most recent period, March 31, 1962 to October 4, 1962. During this period 16,334 persons were enrolled in the programs which the government had assisted the provinces in undertaking. Only 8,372 completed their courses and, at the time the figures were supplied to the house, 4,143 were still undergoing training. So, once again, we find a disturbingly large number of failures. I should not have said that. I should have said, rather, that we have a disturbingly low number of people who actually completed their courses. But in this case, with respect to this bill, the government was not only unable to tell the house how many people had obtained jobs after completing these courses, but it was also unable to say how many people had failed these courses. Thus, the government is becoming more and more reticent as it is queried about the success or failure of this program. It had told us how many had failed during the previous years, but for the present year it says those figures are unavailable. We are told how many have completed the courses, but the government is unable to say how many have failed. The government's penchant for using statistics to colour an unhappy situation has gone almost beyond reasonable limits in this instance, because we have a situation where it has declined to give the house the only information on which we can judge the success or failure of the technical and vocational training program which has been under way for the past few years. I suggest to hon. members that in the absence of full disclosure by the government of figures which I am confident are available, the committee can only conclude that by and large, this program has been, as I suggested earlier, nothing but a failure.

The government's own failure to produce any adequate analysis of the success or failure of its vocational and technical training program