

Labour Conditions

government agree that as of April next these S.E.C. regulations will be waived entirely; because I think they have caused a good deal of concern in Canada, and it would be most unjust if they were imposed next April.

● (2:40 p.m.)

LABOUR CONDITIONS**ANNOUNCEMENT OF CHANGE IN MANPOWER MOBILITY PROGRAM**

Hon. Jean Marchand (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the house of an important change in the manpower mobility program. In the program as instituted at the end of last year, a worker can receive a grant to help him to move only if he has been unemployed for four out of the previous six months. Otherwise he can get assistance but only as a loan. We wish to broaden the grant part of the program, but the house will appreciate that this can be done only carefully, as our administrative experience of this type of assistance increases, so that we do not incur abuses.

The step forward we have now taken affects areas where the shut-down of an enterprise, or a lay-off, is of such a size in relation to total employment in the area that unemployed workers have little chance of getting jobs except by moving. This situation is particularly likely to arise in remote areas, as when a mine closes. The regulations have therefore been amended to provide that the minister may designate such an area, and that unemployed people in the area will then be eligible for mobility grants without the qualification of having been unemployed for four months.

Under the terms of this new regulation I have today designated Bissett, Manitoba, as an area where, for the next 12 months, mobility grants will be available on the new terms. As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, the need for this assistance arises from the shut-down of San Antonio Gold Mines. I should add that in view of the recent announcement of the intended closing of the Wabana mine, I expect shortly to designate Bell Island, Newfoundland, for similar assistance. The problems of the people there may be particularly difficult, and my department is urgently examining, in collaboration with other departments, what special action we might take in conjunction with the designation of the area for mobility grants.

[Mr. Douglas.]

Mr. Robert Muir (Cape Breton North and Victoria): Mr. Speaker, I am sure that we have all listened with great interest to the comments made by the minister with respect to the change in the regulations concerning grants and loans. In particular he mentioned the Wabana area in Bell Island, Newfoundland.

Certainly what has now been announced is a decided improvement over what existed previously. In the long run, however, I suggest that it would be much better for the government to do all it can to provide employment in the particular areas mentioned, and in other similar areas, rather than providing the Gordon one way tickets out of those areas. That remark has particular reference to the maritime provinces.

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): I am sure that members of all parties, and those in the organized labour movement who have called for an expansion of the manpower program, will greet the announcement the minister has made today with a great deal of satisfaction. It indicates at least a beginning of a change in the government's thinking. It seems to many of us and to people outside the house concerned with this that the government and the departments concerned until very recently felt that the manpower program, such as it was, was adequate. It was very obvious to everybody concerned that a good deal needed to be done.

We think this announcement shows a step in the right direction. However, Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister will shortly look at the recommendations of bodies such as the Economic Council which urge that the whole programs of loans be wiped out, and that this kind of problem be dealt with through grants. It is obviously unfair and impractical to expect people who for a long time have been unemployed to pay back money which has been advanced to them so they can move to a job where they can earn a living for themselves and their families. As a beginning, however, we welcome this.

Mr. Réal Caouette (Villeneuve): Mr. Speaker, I have listened attentively to the statement of the minister of manpower (Mr. Marchand) to the effect that, for certain areas of Canada, the government is ready to intervene and grant loans to those who need them and to facilitate their mobility when required.