

*National Training Act*

alarmed, too, that these new laws which will emanate from this act will allow the federal government to apply its criteria and decision-making to what should truly be national priorities and objectives in the educational job-training fields. It will allow the federal government to designate critical national occupations and channel special funding and accelerated training schemes into these areas. It will allow the federal government to pursue social policies and programs through what should be a purely pragmatic industrial and institutionally based series of measures to better prepare working Canadians for the future.

• (1740)

What this measure proposes to establish is yet another Ottawa-based self-contained bureaucratic empire which will pump out unmanageable, unworkable and completely unrealistic studies, programs, plans, rules and regulations—especially rules and regulations—which will all ultimately lead to the old Ottawa law of diminishing returns. The good effects of the billion dollars or so which it is contemplated will be pumped into the national training program will be finally dissipated and diminished simply because an Ottawa-devised and administered program cannot possibly satisfy the local and regional needs of the Canadian economy. It cannot possibly interlock smoothly with existing provincial, institutional and industrial programs.

The whole philosophy behind this initiative depends on the Liberal government's view that it should no longer be merely a clearing house for tax money on its way to the regions. This national training program is simply the latest in a series of initiatives, all designed to increase the power and influence of the central government throughout the length and breadth of the country, in all economic sectors and at all levels of regional governments. As usual, this government is putting its own priorities of political survival before the country's priorities of national economic and social survival. It feels that its own influence and its own profits can be increased measurably by wresting the control and development of our labour force from the educational institutions and from the provinces. It is doing this, or attempting to do it, by changing parts of the basic funding and administrative arrangements now in place, which traditionally have adapted to our changing labour force requirements.

I am not saying that Canada in the future will not face serious problems with respect to her labour force requirements. It is obvious to everyone, especially to our technology and engineering-based industries, that we face extremely serious shortages in the skilled trades categories and that these shortages must be filled if our economy is ever going to approach its full potential.

I can certainly agree with the minister, for example, when he states in his paper that there have been "structural changes in the economy" which are having a profound impact on Canadian labour markets, and that these changes have resulted in "serious and chronic shortages in many highly qualified and higher level industrial skill occupations".

Certainly no one has to be told that in my own riding of Peterborough where fully one third of our labour force is employed by 70 manufacturing-industrial plants. Indeed, they are the very sort of operations which the minister says will benefit most from this new program. I can tell him that the 10 per cent of our 30,000 person total labour force who are unemployed fervently hope that the bill will do exactly that. And yet, how much confidence can Canadians put in their federal government at this time? Why should they take heart from these proposals and suddenly become convinced that the federal government is finally trying to do something that will work and which will put them back to work? Look at what the minister says to justify his program, which contemplates the redistribution of nearly \$1 billion dollars a year. We will touch on the subject of redistribution of \$1 billion a little later. He says, for example, that the federal government must respond to emerging labour needs because, "Major resource development projects are contemplated in all regions of the country." Are they indeed? I need not remind anyone in the House of the fiasco that has already occurred as a result of the National Energy Program, especially with regard to three of our largest resource development projects in the west. Would the minister care to ask the residents of Fort MacMurray, for example, what labour shortages they contemplate as a result of the National Energy Program? And, of course, Ontario, including my own riding, has suffered very much as well as a result of lost business which should have flowed from megaprojects in the west. Now the minister's colleagues are trying to scupper similar energy development in the maritimes.

It saddens me to say so, but the point is that the minister's plans for his national training program were made when there was still a reasonable chance that these western projects would come on line. The government's interventionist policies have effectively put an end to these for the foreseeable future and have actually aggravated the total unemployment situation in Canada. The minister now finds himself in the ironic situation of putting forward this grandiose plan to train people for highly skilled jobs which do not now exist and which will probably not appear as long as his government puts its own interests ahead of the wellbeing of the country.

Many might say to me, "Yes, but we must do something in the present climate to respond to the requirements of new industries and technologies which may eventually help us out of this mess." That is true. But first I would say in reply; be very sure you realize what got us into this mess in the first place. It was not "the world" or "the recession" or "the energy crisis" or any single excuse which we hear from the other side. Indeed, it was no single reason, but a combination of them, all significant, which have caused Canada to fall from the second highest standard of living in the world to the fourteenth in the short space of 14 years—a spot for every year the present Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) has been in power. But people must also be aware that, along with all the other radical changes which have affected our society in the past 20 years, this federal government is right up there as one of the most counter-productive elements in the total equation.