

Employment Tax Credit Act

We have had some very good discussions with the native organizations.

I would point out to the hon. member, so that he will not make the same mistake which the hon. member for Calgary West continually makes, that this is not the only program. We are spending the substantial amount of close to \$70 million on the LEAP program of which close to 40 per cent of the participants are native people.

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Chairman, I am fully aware of the programs that are available. The tragedy of this debate is that I am more aware than the minister of what he has and has not done in the employment-creation field. I am aware that there are many programs, and I think I know more about them than the minister.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: If the hon. member has a point of order, would he come to it? I gather that it was not a point of order.

Mr. de Jong: Mr. Chairman, I would like to question the minister further about the plans, ideas and philosophy of the government as it relates to native people. I understand that treaty Indians are not included in the unemployment statistics. If this is so, would the minister explain the rationale behind that policy. Also, is there any thought of providing or keeping accurate records on the employment of treaty Indian people?

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Chairman, at the present moment, Statistics Canada does not cover reserves in its labour force survey. But there are ways of determining certain figures, which are drawn primarily from the Department of Indian Affairs. That is where we get our figures.

Mr. de Jong: Is it the philosophy of the government to continue to accept the responsibility for treaty Indian people after they leave the reserve and enter into an urban lifestyle?

● (1620)

Mr. Axworthy: Again, Mr. Chairman, as I pointed out, through the initiation of a number of LEAP programs our department has accepted some of the job proposals and job implementations used by native people in the country. I would also point out a fairly interesting innovation with which the hon. member's colleagues from Winnipeg may be familiar. In the major initiative that I announced with the Minister of Regional Economic Expansion in Winnipeg two weeks ago, we indicated that the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was interested in joining in the agreement to provide special programs for native people who were moving off the reserve into the larger urban centres. We will test that to see how it works, as part of the over-all employment creation program for the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. de Jong: Mr. Chairman, the problem with the LIP, LEAP and OFY type of grants is that they are generally of short duration. It can even be claimed that they sometimes create havoc in the lives of participants through a sense of insecurity. People do not have the opportunity to buy a home

and establish a permanent lifestyle because they never know whether the grants will be renewed or what sort of changes may be made in the programs and the philosophies of the government. It is often found that people who exist on grants acquire a great expertise in "grantmanship" and that a lot of their abilities are wasted.

It is not a very wise thing to use community groups to provide needed social and human services, particularly as they relate to native communities. It is better if they are trained to do these things themselves and they are often in the best position to help themselves. It is only good sense to encourage this approach.

The major problem with all these programs is that they are short term and it is not known whether they will continue from one year to the next. Often they are programs that deliver essential social services that the government cannot provide. All too often the services of social welfare departments and hospitals are inaccessible to the native people because of the cultural alienation that exists. It is only sensible to provide human services to the native organizations through the native communities. It appears to me to be cynical to make them short-term projects. This creates disillusionment and a sense that they are receiving gifts for which they must plead and connive, bow and scrape for, rather than giving them the feeling that they are getting money to supply services that they have a right to.

I would ask the minister to give serious consideration to the short-time factor that is involved in the job creation type of program and to ask his department for proposals that would allow long-term funding for native organizations. I wonder if the minister could respond to this suggestion.

Mr. Axworthy: Mr. Chairman, I agree with the hon. member that one of the main objectives of members of this House should be to try to break that horrendous cycle of dependency and poverty that native people in this country experience, but it will not take place overnight.

If the hon. member has been following the announcements made by several of my colleagues, he will know that the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has indicated that he wants to restore a sense of autonomy and independence to band councils so that they may make their own economic and social decisions.

We are attempting to come to grips with the question of land claims which would put a substantial amount of capital in the hands of native organizations and band councils and give them a major source of money for investment so that they may develop their own programs and resources.

I agree with the direction that the hon. member recommends we take and indeed we are trying to move that way. I would ask him to reflect upon some of the initiatives we have taken recently through my department to begin the process of longer-term economic development. Through the local economic development assistance program we intend to set up a series of projects across Canada designed to help communities establish economic development corporations which will enable