

*National Training Act*

What should he have been doing? His own parliamentary committee, which was constituted as a task force a year or so ago, produced a report entitled, "Work for Tomorrow—Employment Opportunities for the Eighties". It gave us a damning indictment of what has transpired in government circles over the last decade in creating training to allow Canadians to meet the changes in the economy. The document faults the government for not having started proper programs years ago, in fact decades ago. Anyone who lives in Canada could see technological changes occurring, and anybody in Canada knows that ten years ago people could not work at the jobs with which they have traditionally found employment in the past.

What was it doing to change it? The parliamentary task force dealing with employment opportunities for the 1980s came up with many recommendations, but only one of its minor recommendations was included in the bill. One fault which we must demonstrate and underline with respect to Bill C-115 is that it goes only a little way toward resolving the problems in Canada.

There are other faults which could be found in the bill. As I indicated, it violates the educational system in Canada. It destroys the mosaic of educational services which have built up over a period of years. It puts many people in the educational system in jeopardy and it gives them concern. This bill does not specifically deal with university training programs, but if we talk to any university president in Canada, he or she will tell you—and in the case of the university in my constituency, Mount Saint Vincent is, of course, a women's college with a woman president; we are very proud of that—that the universities across Canada fear the Government of Canada. They fear its thrust into the field of education because it is not prepared to consult with the educational authorities, it is not prepared to deal with the realities, and it is not prepared to sit down to talk about the experiences of students over the last decade. It simply comes in with an ad hoc program which is designed to cure some evil, to allow them to issue a press release and to say that they are working to stop the problem. It does not appreciate the development of the educational system over the years. It does not appreciate the roles of universities and university administrators who have toiled at their task, in some cases for decades.

What sort of thing do they fear? They fear that the Government of Canada will step in and provide funds for very narrow programs, programs which its departmental advisers claim are needed but are not necessarily desired by those who have completed their secondary education. If we asked the president of Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Dr. Ozmon, he would tell us that the record and ability of university students to choose courses and to seek training which will qualify them for employment has been demonstrated time and time again over the years, that is to say, young Canadian people have the ability to educate themselves in such a way as to provide job training for the future. If we look at the records of universities across Canada—but I will use Saint Mary's in Halifax as an example—we will see the shift in student population from liberal arts courses and similar courses, which did not train persons directly for employment, to business courses such as

commerce and economics. That shift has been demonstrated and is part of the records of universities across Canada. They know what to do. Canadian students and their advisers, the faculties of the universities and the secondary schools know how to direct the funds to provide training for the jobs which are available. The only time they need the advice of the government is when it is offered in a friendly, constructive and co-operative way. They do not need government direction; they need assistance. That is the warning which we want to give Canadians through the medium of the House of Commons in the debate of this bill. We want a government in Canada which co-operates. We want a government in Canada that helps the existing institutions. We do not need a government which simply introduces another program to deal with an existing problem on an ad hoc basis and without regard to what has taken place in the past or to what will happen in the future.

● (2050)

I would like to discuss for a moment the student aid program in Canada. If one has ever seen the provisions embodied in that program one would find a high level of bureaucratic action that worked. It is not hard to identify a student who needs aid. That student is simply someone who indicates that he wants to go to university or some other post-secondary institution and submits his financial situation to show that there is a deficit and that he needs some money. You do not need many definitions of what students are eligible. You do not need many definitions of what courses are included or what kind of institutions they can attend. This bill has simply turned what is a sensible program, backed by a desire to assist students in need, into a bureaucratic maze.

I can give an example of this from an actual case which I encountered. This person had worked for a number of years at what turned out to be a well-paying job in the sales field after completing high school. Now his employment has terminated. The current recession—some would say depression—has created a situation where jobs that were always thought to be secure are being lost. People who are losing their employment realize that there is no hope in the near future of returning to their jobs because their friends and neighbours are also experiencing it. They know that there are simply no jobs available as sales representatives or in similar occupations. Such a person, recognizing the difficulty and seeing that it is semi-permanent at best, takes the opportunity to seek further education. This gives him and people in similar situations the opportunity to qualify in another field. They take this opportunity to acquire the post-secondary education that they did not get after finishing high school. However, what do they find? They find a set of rules applying to students who are 18, 19 or 20 years of age. These rules simply do not apply to a married man who, after working a number of years, has acquired basic assets such as a car and furniture. They discover a rule which says that they must include their wife's income in order to determine their capacity to pay for their education. Although I