

Community Employment Strategy

The Minister of Manpower and Immigration together with the Minister of Health and Welfare has undertaken a lengthy review with the provinces of all the elements involved in the definition of an income security policy for Canada. In connection with this review the Manpower Division is participating in what has been designated as the Community Employment Strategy (CES). This will involve the co-ordination of community activity by all levels of government formally acknowledged by an exchange of letters of understanding between the Minister of Manpower and Immigration and the provincial or territorial governments. The objective of the Community Employment Strategy, as defined in the letters, is to assist people "who experience particular and continuing difficulty in finding and keeping satisfactory continuing employment, and who therefore tend to rely for most or all of their income on some form of transfer payment."

The Minister told the Committee that the Community Employment Strategy is a reflection of a new attitude toward those people.

It is only recently that we have begun to refuse to accept the unemployability of a great number of people who up until now have been thought of as requiring income support with no effort being made to get them into gainful activity That is what the Community Employment Strategy is all about. (4:15)

The Division does not really know how many people there are whose entry into the labour force could be made possible through this program. "Our best guess is that there may be about 400,000 workers plus families and dependents who may fall into this category." The Minister further acknowledged that this group was "generally speaking on welfare." (4:15) The so-called 'target population' of the Community Employment Strategy will also include single parents (mainly single mothers), the mentally and physically handicapped, people with low skills, ex-prisoners, ex-mental patients and native peoples. It is not the intention to focus on individuals alone but also on the types of employment situations and job barriers which contribute to their problem. The so-called community in which the new strategy will be tried has been widely interpreted. The Minister described it to a public gathering: "It could be a town, part of a city, or a rural region. It could even be that we try to help all the single parents in a province, or half of a province or we could focus on native people in a given area for example."²

The federal government has announced that it will spend \$50 million over three years on some 20 pilot projects during the developmental phases of the Community Employment Strategy. The first phase involves the identification of these target groups in the selected communities. The appropriate agencies of the federal and provincial governments will then work together to find a solution applicable to their localized chronic unemployment problem. Their action will be supervised at the senior policy level by the Manpower Needs Committees in each province.

² Speech to Kiwanis Club of Grand Falls, Newfoundland, March 25, 1975.