

National Training Act

The pulp and paper industry, which was one of the strongest sectors in this country, is hovering on the edge of bankruptcy in many cases or is at least in a very restrained situation where there are no employment opportunities.

What has brought this about is the fact that we have been relying on foreign ownership in many cases or on foreign corporations to do the marketing for our companies and those markets have now disappeared. In many cases our forest resources have been abused to such an extent that the industry will not be able to provide for jobs in the future. One of the aspects of the megaprojects was the suggestion that major forest projects would provide an opportunity for employment. That opportunity will not exist unless the government moves very quickly to enhance those forests, to develop a forest products marketing board, and to move into the international field for the sale of forest products. If this is not done and we do not reconsider foreign control of our resource, we will be in very serious difficulty.

Another unique aspect of the forest industry was that a great deal of training was not required in order to gain employment. At the same time, however, pulp mills and saw mills hired enormous numbers of trained people. Instead of training them, these companies would go somewhere else in Canada to steal them from other regions. If you were to visit a plywood mill or a pulp mill on the coast of British Columbia, you would find a sign on the front gate saying, "Do not bother to apply for employment. If you are looking for employment, go down to the local Canada immigration office and get in." Tradesmen, however, could apply directly to the personnel office. The result was that these basic institutions in British Columbia, which were the mainstay of the B.C. economy, were not training a sufficient number of people or providing for the skill base upon which those highly technical operations are run. There was a tremendous shortage which was causing a problem. It is not a problem today since there are probably as many unemployed tradesmen in the forest industry in British Columbia as there are production workers. Tradesmen would have as difficult a time obtaining employment in any sector of the forest industry today as an unskilled production worker would.

One of the most tragic incidents involves those apprentices who have almost finished their program but have been laid off. As a result, their apprenticeships are in jeopardy of being lost.

If Mr. Dodge and the Liberal government are seriously considering continuing this approach to resource exploitation and the sale of raw resources, I suggest that it will not work. That area of the country faces a very serious situation. The employment opportunities within energy and the fishing industry are also in serious jeopardy. This is largely due to government mismanagement.

Another concern I have is native communities. It is interesting to note that this legislation identifies native people as a disadvantaged group. Certainly that is obvious to anyone who knows that native communities experience unemployment at a rate anywhere from 75 per cent to 90 per cent. Native communities do not need training; they need job opportunities.

A number of native communities along the coast of British Columbia have applied for forestry licences in order to establish an economic base from which to work. They have been told by the government, "No thanks. There is no forestry licence for you." What is the point of training these native people as forestry workers when Crown Zellerbach and Rayonier are laying people off and there are no employment opportunities? If natives in their own communities had licences they would have an opportunity to work.

Native communities have applied for roe on kelp licences and the government has told them, "No, thank you." Natives have asked for special consideration regarding fishing licences in order to have an opportunity to enter into the fishing industry, and they have been refused.

An interesting example involves one native community which exists side by side with a white community. An airport is being developed in that area. The native community is 10 to 20 times larger and is more permanent since the other one fluctuates in size. However, does the airport go to the native community which has been trying to get it for years? No, it goes to the other community which may go bankrupt and disappear. The airport is on an island about half a mile away. The cost of marine transportation and food makes the opportunity to create businesses in many of those native communities tremendously expensive.

A final interesting example concerns the fact that many native communities in British Columbia were not allowed any input into the budgeting process this year. They were given a period of two weeks in which to make any input into the budget-making process which directly affected their communities with respect to economic development and job creation. This created an absolutely hopeless situation when you consider the number of native people in British Columbia.

The point I am making is that there is no sense in training native people if the government continues to destroy an economic base which results in 75 per cent to 90 per cent of native people remaining unemployed. What is the point of having unemployed trained people?

There is a desperate need for a strategy to create economic development for native people so that young native Canadians will have the same opportunities as Canadians in other parts of the country.

Mr. Bill Domm (Peterborough): Mr. Speaker, the most alarming aspect of this act is the name with which it will end, namely, the national training program. This immediately puts one in mind of a number of other nationally oriented programs brought in by this government, particularly the National Energy Program. It is to be hoped that this new national training program does not cause such severe negative effects as its predecessor in the energy field.

I must admit that I can see many undesirable elements within the legislation before us. From a broad political point of view, I am disturbed that this act exemplifies once again the government's desire to intrude upon areas which are not traditionally within federal authority or competence. I am