

Labour

who do not fall under the category of major permanent lay-offs and who have not necessarily been working for 15 of the previous 20 years.

The de Grandpré report recommended that the Government examine the special needs of older workers and determine which measures they require to help them re-enter the workforce. Although it is not enough, a study of this kind would be one step toward long-term planning for long-term older worker adjustment solutions.

The council's report was a very innocuous assessment of the problems Canadians will be facing over the years to come, as a result of the trade agreement.

However, the section on older workers in the report is only two pages of a 171-page document. No concrete recommendations are made other than the suggested study mentioned earlier with this minimal recommendation. I urge the Government to look at this as an inadequate first step toward what will need to be done for older workers in the years to come. The process must be stepped up. Adjustment assistance is needed now.

The contribution plan with the provinces must be clearly laid out and the now vague guidelines clarified. This will make it easier for the provinces to take part and share the responsibility for older worker adjustment. The onus is on the federal Government to make this happen. The onus is also on the Government to follow its own guidelines on dealing with specific groups in Canada. Benefits under this program end at age 65.

The second report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Ageing concurred with the witnesses who appeared before it. The committee condemned mandatory retirement as an obvious instance of age discrimination, wasteful of potentially productive labour and, more pointedly, wasteful of capacities for judgment developed during long experience in the workforce. As well, it was condemned as psychologically destructive and in some cases financially destructive of those still capable of wanting and needing to continue working.

Given the committee's recommendations that the federal and provincial Governments undertake the complete abolition of mandatory retirement with the sole exception of a limited class of occupations directly

involving public safety, the fact that benefits through this program are available up to the age of 65 is not in keeping with fair and humane policies for older workers as stated in the committee's recommendations.

This morning's edition of *The Star* reported that Metro Toronto's only retraining centre for older workers and immigrants is losing the federal Government's annual funding of \$600,000. It is appalling to note that this centre has been used by the federal Government's adjustment service to help workers who lose their jobs as a result of plant closing.

Is this a sign of things to come? It is surely a sign of the Government's commitment to older worker and immigrant adjustment programs. With an inadequate program before the House, surely this is not the time to stifle community initiatives to deal with the problems of older workers. The success rate of the centre was something about which the staff members should be proud. It helped 511 workers since it opened in 1987 and statistics show as few as 14 per cent of them are still looking for work. The Government admits that there is no similar program targeting older workers and immigrants in the Toronto area.

I ask members of the Government how they can live with themselves when worth-while programs like these are being slashed in such a heartless and thoughtless manner. The callousness of this move is only an inkling of colder and harder times to come.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about the federal Government's responsibility as a major employer in this country in terms of older workers. The Government over the last few years has cajoled, bribed and virtually forced retirements of workers at least ten years before they were ready to retire, to their economic disadvantage in many cases and to the loss to the Government and to the public of Canada of many years of worth-while and wise experience gained through serving the Canadian public.

The Worker Adjustment Program put forward by the Government for its own employees is not a model that we should be encouraging the private sector to adopt. We have a unique opportunity as an employer, and again as the largest employer in Canada, to develop models within the workplace for the adjustment of workers on a continual basis.