

Unemployment

[Translation]

Mr. Gilbert Parent (Welland): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see that the debate has taken a new turn, because the last three speakers have spoken more constructively than the first ones I heard.

I should like to deal this afternoon with five areas, and I hope to make suggestions and recommendations to my colleagues so that they will know that positive measures are being taken in Canada in connection with the employment of Canadians.

[English]

The five areas that I should like to touch on are employment service, industrial and labour market adjustment, training, direct job creation and, if possible, disadvantaged employment.

Il va sans dire, Mr. Speaker, that the provision of an effective employment service is one of the main responsibilities of the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy). I suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is also a responsibility for every member of Parliament in this House.

I am fully aware of those aspects of the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission service that can and should be improved. I am impressed with much of its performance to date and its plans for improvement. Just last Friday the Minister of Employment and Immigration presided at the official opening of the metropolitan order processing system in Toronto. This is a computerized method of recording all job vacancies and unemployed clients in a metropolitan area. It is a far cry from the paper-based technology which quite often resulted in an employment centre knowing very little about its clients or the job openings in its immediate area.

What is the significance of this innovative system? First, it has proved that the CEIC process has had a dramatic effect on the quality of service provided to employers and to workers. For example, MOPs, as it is called, the metropolitan order processing system, was installed in metropolitan Vancouver two years ago and was a major factor contributing to the 50 per cent increase in the number of vacancies listed and people placed by Canada employment centres in greater Vancouver.

The second and perhaps most important consequence that should be associated with the launching of MOPS in Toronto is that it signifies and is symbolic of a quiet revolution that according to international experts in such matters will result in the finest employment service in the free world within three or four years.

This may surprise you and some of my colleagues a little, Mr. Speaker. At first blush, I must say it took me happily by surprise. As I thought it over, I realized that the expectations against which we and the public measure the performance of Canada employment centres is really quite unrealistic. The centres are considered to be ineffective if they have not found a job for our sons, daughters or neighbours, whether or not there are any job openings for persons with their skills. Similarly, they are considered to have failed if they have been unable to find a skilled worker for any employer, whether or

not the employer has fulfilled his or her obligations to train people.

What is the basis for this international opinion that Canada's employment service is emerging as the finest in the world? Partly, of course, it is a reflection of its performance to date. I will note a few of the positive results. Between 800,000 and 900,000 placements are made per year; people who go through the CEC route find jobs three weeks sooner than those who do not; 60 per cent of the people who look for jobs use the CECs as a job search vehicle. Partly, too, the international view is a reflection of our new national job bank, whereby all jobs which cannot be filled locally are entered into a national computer system and made known to all CECs across Canada.

Just as MOPS creates a "metropolitan" labour market, the national job bank has, since its inception 12 months ago, created a truly national labour market.

It sometimes happens that people in my riding have skills for which there is no demand at a particular time. The hon. member for St. Catharines (Mr. Reid) knows that we had to import people with welding skills for the naval shipyard. We were able to fill some of these jobs by going to the national job bank and bringing in people from as far away as the west coast. That bank was a great help in my previous riding. Some of the people now in that riding are currently being trained under that program.

Experts in other countries are similarly impressed with the work the CECs are doing in developing an effective employment counselling service. Counselling is the core or heart of an employment service's ability to assist people who have difficulty entering or staying in jobs. Canada is recognized internationally as a leader in the development of effective employment counselling. This is reflected in the fact that last September the first world seminar on employment counselling was held in Ottawa and attracted some 600 people from more than 15 countries.

These are just some of the reasons why the Canada employment service is so highly respected. We should take pride in the service and the people who staff its offices. It is a system which brings job seekers and job vacancies together effectively and efficiently for the benefit of all concerned.

I am putting great stress on the development of an effective counselling service. As hon. members know, while many of the people who come to CECs are fully job-ready, many are not. These range all the way from those who need training in how to conduct their own job search, to those who require a great deal of counselling on how to prepare themselves for the labour market and even how to retain employment. Of course, such counselling assistance is labour-intensive. However, consistent with the government's policy of helping those who need it most, this is a function that will receive priority attention.

For those members of our population who need more specialized assistance than that provided by a nominal CEC—I am thinking more of women returning to the labour market after raising their families, or natives, or the blind and the handi-