

*Manpower and Immigration Council*

months, of the department in this field. I wonder whether, in spite of the fact that many such advisory groups might be created by the department, the department will indeed be willing to listen and listen closely to the advice that is brought forward.

I for one have been greatly disturbed by the way in which a number of local situations have developed. In many cases we have to refer to our own experience. The newly created manpower offices seem unable at times to grasp the realities in local situations. They seem unwilling to recognize what are indeed the real interests in these matters and they seem incapable of dealing with them in a way in which such problems could be effectively resolved.

• (5:40 p.m.)

In the past few years we have had an increasingly effective program in Prince Edward Island to assist people seeking to have themselves retrained either for new vocations or to improve the particular skills used in their present employment. Indeed, I can speak from very personal experience when I say that the previous program which was abandoned to a degree this year did a great deal this past spring for many of the rural residents of Prince Edward Island. However, we are discovering now that with greater activity on the part of the department of manpower there is a greater unreality or a movement away from the prospects for which we had hoped with regard to the gradual decrease of a hard core of continuing unemployment and sometimes seasonal unemployment. What this means in fact is that to date at least the department of manpower seems not to be listening more to what is happening in various regional situations but is listening less. If we are simply creating national boards and agencies that will do nothing more than provide a rubberstamp for the present direction of manpower policies and activities, we are certainly not going to improve the situation which currently exists.

It has struck me as well that apart from the very poor communications which have been established with the local communities concerning needs and possibilities there is a similar breakdown in communications with the various provinces. This afternoon facts and figures have been quoted which would indicate that as a result of this breakdown in communications the possibilities of activity which these offices might exercise have been greatly diminished. I hope that later in this debate the minister may be able to supply us with answers to such questions and will be

able to explain why it is that instead of improved communications, instead of expanded opportunities, instead of greater hope for people who have lived for years with conditions of lingering poverty and dangerously high unemployment rates, we have in fact moved away from some very good results that were being achieved during the last few years. It seems to me that if committees and councils are to be established there must be a very firm indication that they will be in close touch with local communities and with the leaders in local communities who are in contact with the realities of the situation and that the closest possible liaison will be maintained with provincial governments and departments. My experience leads me to believe that to date this has not taken place.

Furthermore, I think we would be anxious to learn from the minister who are the people who will be appointed to the various councils dealing with adult training, vocational rehabilitation and the adjustment of immigrants to Canada. We must be very sure that we do not simply supply a number of loyal party supporters with the opportunity to be remunerated for their past good work but that we will make available to the department people with genuine expertise and experience who have something to contribute not only at the national level but also in the local areas, in provinces, regions and local communities. We would also like to know how much will be required of these people so that genuine thought can be given to the choice of the very best people to fill these positions.

I have also been concerned a little—I hope this will also be clarified as we proceed with this debate—whether or not most of this advice will simply be directed to what might be termed the head office in Ottawa or whether there will be established strong communication links and responsibility for decisions at local levels. The minister has indicated to the house that there will be a move away, in terms of some of the responsibilities of this department, from complete centralization. In other words, he said there will be a decentralization of many of the decision-making processes which will be necessary to make these programs effective. I hope that such will also be the case with the advisory committees operating at local levels and that they will not have to see their advice pertaining to local situations move all the way up the chain of command and communication to some omnipotent figure on the national scene who will decide in his