

*National Training Act*

alternative to employment. It took people off the unemployment rolls. Approximately \$800 million per year was spent to take several tens of thousands of people off the rolls for several months. In many cases people completed one training program and did not obtain employment, so they attended another program. It was an alternative mechanism for collecting unemployment insurance.

The present situation, with unemployment, small business bankruptcies and shrinking opportunity for trained people to obtain employment, is a tragedy. The bill before us today indicates that the government's priorities are in the wrong place. I assume the bill will be improved in committee and that it will be satisfactory, but we should be looking at ways to create employment.

Tens of thousands of farmers are going bankrupt. I am sure hon. members have had farm representatives in their offices pleading with them to do something to stop farm bankruptcies. There is an enormous amount of employment associated with the farming community. One of the biggest examples of bankruptcy has been in the area of farm implement dealers. Certainly farming creates an enormous amount of employment. The opportunity for people interested in becoming trained in the agricultural field is shrinking. It is drifting away rapidly because the government is not finding ways to protect farmers from bankruptcies, to ensure that those assets and producing units remain intact, to ensure that opportunities for young people exist, and to ensure that the training is in place.

The hon. member for Nanaimo-Alberni (Mr. Miller) has often mentioned fishermen and the tremendous problem of bankruptcies in the fisheries. There are industries associated with fishing such as shipbuilding, processing and handling the product. Essentially many firms are closing down. There have been bankruptcies and other difficulties. Banks and financial institutions have been seizing the mechanisms by which these people earn their livelihoods, many of whom have worked all their lives in that area. This is another source of employment for young people and others which is drying up. Ultimately training programs in this area will disappear.

I have referred to bankruptcies in the fishing industry and the other tremendous problems with which it is faced because the bill before us today and the national training program of the minister referred a great deal to native Canadians and their access to the economy. This disadvantaged group does not have access to the economy. On the coast of British Columbia an important economic opportunity for native people is the fishing industry. A large number of them are involved in the salmon enhancement program which is being rapidly destroyed by high interest and inflation rates, as well as by the failure and mismanagement of government.

I should like to deal for a moment with home owners. Individuals are losing their homes, the most important possession of their lives. Again this is because of government policies. There are many low-income and medium-income individuals out there who cannot acquire homes and need decent accommodation. Because of the shortfall in housing units, this is perhaps one sector of the economy in which employment could be created by developing a rational housing program aimed at

meeting the needs of Canadians who are desperately trying to hold on to their homes or to acquire affordable housing. It would provide tremendous opportunity for employment. Many programs today have been training plumbers, framers, carpenters, pipefitters and surveyors for the housing industry. There could be a tremendous opportunity in this area, but those programs will be for naught if the government does not straighten out its priorities.

Over the last year we have seen the pain and agony of individuals who are facing the block. Many small businesses, home owners, farmers and individuals have gone bankrupt. Also there has been a serious problem with the number of unemployed people in the country. We have watched major corporations such as the automobile industry go through tremendous changes and shifts in employment. The availability of that sector for trained people is disappearing, but there are still more to go. For example, it looks like Dome is hanging on by its fingernails. It was the great hope of the Canadian Government. The Liberal majority was looking seriously at the energy sector as a place in which to create opportunity. We see that sector in difficult straits. It is either backing away from major projects or facing difficulty, with bankruptcy looming around the corner. With examples like the Admiral Appliance Company, the auto industry, Dome Petroleum and Massey Ferguson, we might find in a short period of time that it is not individuals, small businessmen, fishermen and farmers who will go bankrupt, but that in fact the major corporations of this country may go down the chute because of mismanagement, high interest rates and the collapse of markets. These are the major employers who provide opportunity for training and the ones on whom we will count to pull the economy out of the ditch.

● (1730)

The previous speaker, the hon. member for Prince Albert (Mr. Hovdebo), mentioned that the training program which is before us today was largely based on a report from an employee of Employment and Immigration entitled "Challenge for An Uncertain Decade". That particular report, on which the national training program was based, had the underlying assumption that Canadians would find job expansion in western Canada and in the resource industries. These opportunities presumably would come from resource extraction and the sale of raw materials. This is not a new industry to those areas even though expansion occurs.

Much has been made of energy. I would like to deal with the forest industry for a moment. I believe that this industry provides an example of the dilemma faced by training and employment and of how faulty is the approach to extracting resources and selling them in an unprocessed state. There are about a dozen major pulp and paper mills on the coast of British Columbia. There are a number of saw mills and some plywood mills as well. There is also a large number of people who earn their living in the forests of British Columbia. The climate of the logging industry at the present time is flat. There are very few people employed in that industry, and some mills have closed because of the stagnant housing industry.