

with other agencies, other industries, other governments? Nonsense!

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I desperately hope that when I resume my seat, Mr. Speaker, the minister or the parliamentary secretary will reply to some of these charges and indicate that there are now hundreds of projects being actively negotiated. Perhaps I have only been in touch with a small number and have not heard of all of them. Perhaps that will happen, and if it does I will be the first to rise in my place and apologize for misconstruing what the government and its agency is doing with respect to the program.

A few days ago in response to criticism, the Secretary of State said that quite obviously one of the difficulties they faced was that they were dealing with a crash program.

Mr. Stanfield: What a crash!

An hon. Member: Yes, a crash to the ground.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Never has a minister been so damned out of his own mouth, Mr. Speaker, as when he used the term "crash program". It may well be that the Secretary of State will live to regret its use. Certainly, the minister was not overstating the fact when he described the Opportunities for Youth program as a crash program.

I mentioned earlier that it was only at the very last minute that people were eventually brought together to work on this program. I want to make it very clear, Mr. Speaker, that in voicing this criticism I am not necessarily criticizing individual members of the staff although I think there are some inadequacies there. In general, though, the people who started to work at a late date on this program have worked long hours and have tried their best to pull together the shambles handed to them by the Secretary of State. We are faced with a situation, Mr. Speaker, in which no amount of good will and no amount of human energy could have saved this government from its original mismanagement.

The Secretary of state is not here today but perhaps one of his spokesmen can reply when I ask, if indeed this program was a last minute, crash program, why was it so?

Mr. Stanfield: Because he was writing a book.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Perhaps he was writing another book. I have no knowledge of that but it seems to be a popular pastime.

Mr. Baldwin: He was probably correcting the first one.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): If he was writing a book it seems to me that his first responsibility was to exercise the duties of his ministry.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Opportunities for Youth Program

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I have nothing against his ability to write, indeed, he writes extremely well, but let's not have him do it on government time.

Some hon. Members: Hear hear!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Why, Mr. Speaker, were we faced with such a last minute slapdash approach to such an important section of our society? Did the minister not have enough staff?

• (3:30 p.m.)

Mr. Dinsdale: People should read some of the stories in our newspapers.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I have been struck by the fact that ministries, including the Prime Minister's office, are under no limitation with respect to hiring additional staff whenever necessary. Surely, no one was holding the minister's hands and saying, "We are sorry Gérard but we cannot give you the kind of staff you need for that kind of program" Nobody would take such a suggestion seriously. Did the government not know what was happening? Did they not know that there would be problems concerning student unemployment this summer? If they did not know, they were among the most select group in this country, because for months we had been told about student unemployment pending this summer.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): If the situation was a mystery, it must have been a mystery even for those who work for the government. I do not think that it can be said that the minister did not have enough staff. I do not really believe it was a case of the government not knowing. In the final analysis, it is clear they did not care.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Surely, the charge that they did not care is most shocking. They did not care about one of our most important resources—I was about to use another word but I think I will stick to resources. Our young people are really much more than a resource. They are the generation on which the future of this country must be built, and the government did not care about them. It was not good enough for the Secretary of State to say, even inadvertently, "You know, we were dealing with a kind of crash program." That answer is not good enough for this House and it is not good enough for the young people of this country.

Because this has been a crash program, the kind of incompetence connected with it almost defies the imagination. Chaos would be too mild a description for the obvious manifestations of the Opportunities for Youth program. Requests have not been answered. Telephones have not been answered. Letters have not been answered and people have not been able to get in touch with offices. These things are obvious indications of utter and total mismanagement.

I said a moment ago that it would not be entirely fair to criticize those who came from outside the government