

Adjournment Debate

tunities for Youth and the Company of Young Canadians would be curtailed. The Prime Minister simply indicated that the government was aware of the importance of those programs and also was aware of its own responsibilities with respect to anti-inflation measures. In spite of the fact that on December 11, when I raised the question, some 317,000 young people were unemployed—a figure which has now risen a month later to 327,000 unemployed and I suspect when we receive the figures tomorrow it will again show an increase—the only kind of firm indication that the government was concerned about this problem was the announcement that the Department of Manpower and Immigration was assigning \$24 million to obtaining student employment next summer.

● (2210)

That would create an estimated 12,000 jobs, a drop in the bucket, and far fewer jobs than the government had said it would create by way of various programs established in the preceding three or four years. That shows how much the government's anti-inflation fight is being fought on the backs of the disadvantaged and of those unable to protest against the government's action. Young people, for the most part, are not organized into pressure groups. Many of them are in secondary educational or post-secondary educational institutions, or have just left such institutions, and their job opportunities are limited.

Surprisingly, from time to time Prime Minister has made protestations to suggest that he takes the problem seriously. Although I congratulate the Minister of Manpower and Immigration for being concerned about this problem, I suggest that he ought to be more forthright than he was with my colleague from Hamilton West who, on December 9, raised specific questions about youth unemployment. The minister indicated then that a number of programs are designed to alleviate the problem of youth unemployment. He referred to such things as manpower mobility, youth training, counselling, and so on, general programs relating to the specific problem affecting young people. The minister was good enough to suggest that, after he had looked at the statistical trends on which the hon. member based his question, he might be able to answer the question in more detail, and presumably provide the country with leadership in alleviating this serious and continuing problem.

I will not read questions asked in the House in the past half dozen years about youth unemployment. Instead I shall quote from the report of the committee on youth, commissioned by the government in 1969, and received in 1970. On page 166 of the report there occurs the following passage:

Not only is the rate of youth unemployment rising, it is consistently at a higher ratio among this age group than all others. It is evident, first of all, that no substantive solution can occur until one of Canadian economic policy's major goals becomes full employment within sectors, whether by age, sex or region.

After referring to the high level of youth unemployment that existed four or five years ago, the report said this:

The present tragedy is more than personal; it is societal in scope. Canadian society cannot seem to generate a broad range of options for its young in the employment field.

The government has not been short of advice. It received the advice of the Hunter task force of 1971, and the advice of my party in the last general election. We said:

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

For the immediate short term, a Progressive Conservative government would establish a jobs agency for young Canadians in the Department of Manpower to:

- a. co-ordinate and focus federal economic and social policies affecting youth employment;
- b. seek to co-ordinate provincial and private-sector policies affecting youth employment;
- c. provide a year-round national counselling facility designed to serve young Canadians; and
- d. provide young Canadians with one agency that would go out and locate potential jobs, encourage young people to come for aid in finding work, and encourage potential employers to consider hiring young workers.

Those are some of our suggestions. Since the government has not been reluctant to use some of our suggestions to do with other matters brought forward in 1974, I hope it will review some of the other things we said somewhat less than two years ago about this basic social problem. Perhaps this evening the minister, in responding to the question and to the concerns raised by the Prime Minister on December 11, will provide some leadership and encouragement.

Hon. Robert K. Andras (Minister of Manpower and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, regrettably the three minutes for reply permitted on the late show does not allow one to cover the whole ground. Without question I share deeply the concern the hon. member has expressed with regard to this continuing phenomenon which has been exacerbated in Canada by the rapid growth of the labour force, a statistic with which we are all familiar. We share this misfortune with other countries which are beginning to realize the serious and perhaps all pervasive, long-lasting damage which can be done if we do not mutually find ways to correct the situation. Incidentally, I shall be attending an OECD conference in two or three weeks which will deal with this subject matter. I say that to give the hon. member some information. I hope it will help. I might also indicate that many other countries are facing the same problems without, unfortunately, yet finding pat solutions.

We have cut out Opportunities for Youth. I am glad to get the indication that that program was accepted by the hon. member. However, it was not accepted by all members of his party. It was, I felt, an unhappy necessity because of budget constraints on one hand and looking very carefully at where we get the biggest bang for a buck, if I can put it that way.

The hon. member understated the position when he mentioned that the \$24 million will provide only 12,000 jobs. That is a fact with regard to the direct employment. There will be another 110,000 indirect jobs provided in unpaid program activities and the like.

I really think that to concentrate on where the solutions must be found in the intermediate and longer term, it will have to be in the private sector. I do not think in any size of job creation that we attempt to soak all of this that the government, as an employer of last resort, would be successful, and in fact could introduce other evils or difficulties that we better watch very carefully before we go that route.

About 85 per cent of the jobs provided to students in summer, in spite of the job creation of the federal and provincial governments working in co-operation, has been