

Unemployment among Youth

Canadians contributing to the development of this country.

Mr. Walter C. Carter (St. John's West): Mr. Speaker, my remarks tonight will be brief. Hon. members on this side of the House who spoke in the debate earlier placed on record the sorry story of the number of unemployed youths in this country. Having just listened to the hon. member for Peterborough (Mr. Faulkner), I can well imagine how encouraged the vast majority of the unemployed in Canada, indeed the 48.7 per cent of our people who are under 25 years of age, must be and will be tomorrow morning on reading the hon. member's statements.

I can sympathize with the hon. member in his efforts to defend the Opportunities for Youth program. I am sure that we all realize that in some areas the program has had some effect. But for the vast majority of our unemployed young people the program is nothing more than a farce and is of very little consequence to the large number of our youth who this summer are facing the prospect of unemployment.

The position taken by our party has been outlined to the House by my colleague, the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan). He has outlined the Stanfield program which we intend to put into effect when we form the next government. We feel that this program will attack the major social ills in this country, particularly with respect to our young people who are unemployed.

I want to impress on the House how crucial this problem is in a province like Newfoundland. Newfoundland, being thinly populated and underdeveloped, is still struggling to find its way economically into the Canadian mainstream. Our young people in Newfoundland are even more frustrated than young Canadians on the mainland because the frustrations faced by young people in the province of Ontario, for example, are even greater in a province like Newfoundland because of its geographic position and the other major problems affecting industry in our province.

It is much more difficult for young Newfoundlanders to go to another part of Canada to look for work. It is not simply a matter of getting out on the Trans-Canada Highway and thumbing your way, because you cannot thumb your way across the 100 miles of water which separate our province from the mainland of Canada. In a province like Newfoundland there are no major industrial giants such as General Motors, Ford, Stelco, Inco or federal government departments such as we have in Ottawa which can absorb a large number of young people for summer work.

Like other hon. members, I am sure, my office files are bulging with letters from young people, letters that come in almost daily from young people seeking assistance in obtaining jobs for the summer. Only this morning one young man from my constituency was in my office looking for a job because he, like many others, will have to work for a year to get enough money to continue his courses at university.

In Newfoundland we have just had graduation day at our very Fisheries College. Hundreds of young men are now ready to introduce new skills and efficiency into our primary industry the fishery. There are thousands of

[Mr. Faulkner.]

young men who want to join their fathers in their fishing boats, but many of our finest fishermen are not able to ply their trade because of the many obstacles placed in their way by the federal government, a federal government which allows foreigners to come to our fishing banks and take all the fish. This government stubbornly refuses to make assistance available to the fisheries under DREE.

The problem of unemployed youth is closely tied to the over-all problem of unemployment. I am sure the same is the case in other provisions, but it is even more so in ours because in Newfoundland we cannot afford to lose our young people. We cannot afford to have university students such as those at Memorial University, with a rapidly increasing enrolment soon to approach 10,000 students who are trained to use their skills, forced to leave the province to find employment. We cannot afford to have our Fisheries College graduate skilled craftsmen, only to see them leave Newfoundland to seek employment on the Canadian mainland.

We Newfoundlanders have just selected a new business-like government committed to giving the fishing industry a new lease on life. It has also established definite priorities for development. What we need now is an understanding and sympathetic government in Ottawa to work with our provincial government to help us achieve these aims.

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More than half of the work force in Newfoundland falls into the category of youth under 25 years of age. They must not be allowed to fall victims of the welfare trap. They must not be made the pawns of a cynical, arrogant federal government which has deliberately created unemployment.

A solution for young Newfoundlanders and for young Canadians in general is an over-all policy developed by governments which will set out the long-term utilization of the skills of the young. Our educational system must be geared to turn out trained young men and women whose skills will be needed. Perhaps we should de-emphasize the attaining of a university degree, especially if the degree is only going to add to the longest list of unemployment university graduates in Canada's history. Our universities and trade schools should be better geared to the manpower market. This trend is already apparent in the United States where university enrolments are down and more and more young people are turning to trades colleges.

There are also some short-term solutions. I endorse the proposal put forth by the Canadian Council on Social Development last week, namely, the establishment of a network of youth manpower centres, setting up a youth employment directorate, improving liaison between manpower centres and welfare agencies, making special travel and settlement allowances to young people and improving manpower training by such steps as removing the 52-week limitation on upgrading courses. These, of course, are just suggestions for improving the facilities available to the young people to assist them in finding jobs. I think it is apparent that the real solution rests with a return to proper fiscal and economic policies by the federal government. When private industry is encouraged to expand and develop, the major problems of unemployment will be substantially reduced.