

Opportunities for Youth Program

the opposition. We have no illusions but we think it is unfair, as well as premature, to judge the total program on the basis of one or two predictions of failure on the part of people who are invariably prepared to assume the worst. It is this dimension of the attack on Opportunities for Youth which I personally resent most as one who is involved in this program. I think it is the sort of thing which the young people themselves will resent the most. In my view it is a great mistake to blow up these failures, to look on them as typical of what is going on while failing to recognize that thousands of young people will be working in a meaningful and responsible way, aided by public funds. I am disturbed, in short, by the imbalance which this type of approach creates. It is exactly this for which I hope the opposition, and particularly the official opposition will be held accountable.

Mr. Paproski: You did the same thing with the Company of Young Canadians.

● (5:20 p.m.)

Mr. Faulkner: What we are faced with today, Mr. Speaker, is a blanket condemnation of the total program. The motion deplors the misuse and mismanagement of the Opportunities for Youth program. It is not a selective indictment. It does not cite particular programs. It does not deal with specifics. It is a blanket indictment.

It is particularly surprising that the motion is moved by the hon. member for Egmont, because I am prepared to give him his due and to say that at the beginning of the program he was one of those who most vigorously supported it.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Supported the idea of it.

Mr. Faulkner: Mr. Speaker, I would make this suggestion to the House, that before members of the House get involved in selecting specific projects as failures—acknowledging that there may have been legitimate examples of this—and before parading them before the House as proven failures, I think in fairness to those involved the charges should be checked out. One of the most fundamental principles in this House is that facts should be verified before charges are paraded in the House and allegations made against people. That is one of the most fundamental principles of politics.

Not only does this principle protect a politician who is prepared to make a charge; it also protects the integrity of those who are not here in this House to defend themselves. I am not simply being critical of members of the House; I am equally critical of those people outside the House who have seen fit to secure for themselves an unusual amount of publicity by questioning individual projects about which, when you talk to them privately, they do not have much to say.

The hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald), who was the keynote speaker on this particular motion, the lead-off man for the Progressive Conservative party, spoke for something like 20 to 30 minutes in response to the motion that I have cited several times. What were the

[Mr. Faulkner.]

charges of misuse and mismanagement? What were the specifics that were brought before this House, and corroborated as proof positive that there has been misuse and mismanagement of the program? I listened to him carefully, as I always do, but the only note I have is that at one point in his remarks he said that there were certain "questionable projects". He then went on with an even more "devastating" criticism and accused the government of being somewhat "slapdash."

When he had exhausted that battery of artillery, Mr. Speaker, he had to rely upon the oldest possible criticism of the Liberal government, namely that there has been a degree of arrogance in the way we presented the program. That was the sum and substance of the criticisms that were levelled by the official opposition in support of a blanket condemnation of a program that most of us feel in principle, in thrust and in purpose is one of the most valuable we have produced in this country. The hon. member knows perfectly well that the charges that he has made would not stand up for 30 seconds before an impartial tribunal of 12 honest men, good and true.

If the hon. member for Egmont, and his distinguished colleague from Edmonton, have specific charges to make, then it seems to me that what they should do is this. We who understand the program appreciate that perhaps it was set up rather too quickly, and that may be a fair criticism to make of it. Nevertheless, the program was set up with the best will and intentions in the world in order to mobilize some of the most dedicated people in this country. Therefore, it seems to me that in fairness what we should do is to start keeping our criticisms to ourselves until we discover whether some legitimate criticisms can be made, and then we can deal with them.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I rise on a question of privilege, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Egmont on a question of privilege.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I very much resent the remarks of the parliamentary secretary, who knows only too well the number of specific criticisms I have indeed conveyed to the minister, as well as to the parliamentary secretary, but, to which as yet I have received no detailed reply. I have waited patiently for a reply for the very reason he has outlined, namely not to endanger the overall good effect of the program. I resent the deliberate misleading of this House by the hon. member's suggestion that no detailed criticism has been made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member may have a grievance or grievances, but I suggest he has no question of privilege.

Mr. Faulkner: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to misrepresent the position of the hon. member for Egmont but I certainly do not remember receiving anything that specifically called into question certain projects. I know what his basic beef is, and I think it may be a legitimate one. Although he may call into question the distribution of projects, in fairness both to him and to myself I must