

ment and Immigration (Mr. Roberts) and the Secretary of State (Mr. Joyal). I shall also be making a pragmatic analysis of the present circumstances of young Canadian men and women and seeking ways of improving those circumstances as quickly and as satisfactorily as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this is a very important task. I will have to work very hard to meet the expectations of my colleagues in the House and those of our young Canadians. Since I am the first person to be appointed Minister of State for Youth in Canada, I realize that I am breaking new ground. I have a new perspective on the relationship between Canadian youth and the Government of Canada and also a new perception of the many government programs and policies that have been developed in the past. My fellow members cannot, of course, expect this new perception to be crystal clear at this stage. In fact, I shall try above all to ensure that the new ministry will be a reflection of our young people.

[English]

To this end, I will continue the consultations with young people, begun by the Hon. Member for Shefford (Mr. Lapierre) and the Secretary of State (Mr. Joyal), in order to ensure that the Government of Canada is ever more accessible to young people, ever more directed by young people and their ideals, and ever more attuned to the new Canada they envision.

Although I hope to embrace the ideals of youth, I am not blind to the unhappiness which afflicts many young Canadians. It is easy for older people to hearken back to youth as a golden age in which the persistent worries of later life, the hectic pace, the decisions and defeats are blissfully unknown. In fact, youth is a time of transition and uncertainty as much as one of hope. Their worries centre on such vital problems as going to school or dropping out, choosing a career, getting married. They are worried about politics and the larger world; about whether there will be a world to inherit at all. And always, for today's youth, there is unemployment. In Canada, youth unemployment is far too high and combatting it is, therefore, this Government's priority.

We may take pride in the fact that the rate of employment growth in the second half of 1983 was nearly double that of the OECD average, which helped to account for the 378,000 jobs, seasonally adjusted, which were created in 1983. However, our youth have not been the main beneficiaries of this growth as economic recovery has taken hold. Young workers, following the rule that they are the first fired and the last hired, must continue to wait for job opportunities which will not only provide income but also the experience and training on which to build their careers. What is more, young people have suffered a loss of purpose and social contact. They do not have a job where they can make friends. All this has been at a huge social and financial loss to all Canadians. And the result, I am afraid, is that too many young people have lowered their expectations, have stopped searching for the future they want and have begun to settle for less.

*The Address—Mrs. Hervieux-Payette*

But my Ministry is rooted in the premise that a country's greatest resource is its people. Despite hard times, we find in Canada's youth the best of our ideals and the most powerful energies and beliefs. These characteristics will shape tomorrow's world and their impact will be felt sooner than we may think. Just yesterday it seems today's leaders were young and in school, anxious to change the world. Today, at the very brink of the responsibilities of their lifetime, young people await the challenges of the future.

These young people are as individual as they are numerous. Among them are women and men, natives, rich and poor. Many of them have already achieved much in their own right. Among them are sports stars who have made Canada's name known and respected throughout the world. Among them too are musicians, young entrepreneurs, skilled workers, students, writers, computer wizards and achievers in many other fields. They are the final argument against the "settle for less" attitude caused by economic hard times. They are our mainstay against the economic mediocrity which such attitudes could produce.

One of the immediate challenges I face as Minister of State for Youth is overseeing the participation of Canada in International Youth Year. The United Nations has devoted 1985 to young people and has established three themes: participation, development, and peace, to provide a focus for activities.

The International Youth Year offers a unique opportunity to youth to involve themselves in a significant way in the discussion and resolution of issues which affect their lives. The year gives us a focus to continue to encourage the personal development of young people in the direction they choose, and to heighten their awareness of our increasingly interdependent world. It is also an opportunity to foster an improved international understanding and co-operation which young people in all countries seek.

I am approaching my responsibilities for the International Youth Year in the same way that I approach all other aspects of my Youth Ministry, with the emphasis on meeting, consulting and listening to the young people of our country. The International Youth Year offers us a special opportunity to raise public awareness of the situation of young people and the contribution they make to society. In my meeting with young people on this subject they have stressed how important their active involvement is in the planning of the year and the activities that will take place in Canada to mark it.

• (1610)

[Translation]

Young people have asked that the International Youth year be organized by them and for them, the role of the Government being to provide flexible support for their own initiatives. They also want the Youth year to bring about a change of attitude and approach in the dealings of the Government with them. I share the concerns and the hopes of young people for the year 1985.