

employed young people in the nine capitals of the EC are taken very seriously by officialdom, which has painful memories of the Paris uprising in the spring of 1968. Current experience in North America, where youth unemployment is even higher than in Europe and where in the big cities it is increasingly associated with prostitution, drug-addiction and violent crime, also prompts official action — but of the wrong kind.

Proposals under preparation in the EC capitals tend to focus on the principle of paying industry to expose school-leavers to the work environment as an educational, rather than economic, measure. There are already various national schemes following the example of Canada and the United States, where unemployed school-leavers are paid low wages for "community" work that could be otherwise more effectively carried out by properly-trained and -organized labour. Such projects include the removal from public places of aerosol-sprayed graffiti often put up by the youngsters themselves outside working hours.

The dimensions of the problem of youth unemployment were illustrated by the attention it was given, at the top of the agenda, during the summit conference of the world's seven richest nations — Canada, the United States, Britain, France, Italy, West Germany and Japan — in London earlier this year. Yet bureaucracies still try to hide the problem from the public.

In West Germany, for example, federal grants are given to organizations and firms running extra vocational-training courses — in other words, training future employees whom they are unlikely to need. In the Netherlands, 16-year-olds who do not wish to attend day-school full-time are obliged to undergo part-time schooling. In Sweden, grants are available to employers for the training of employees who might otherwise be laid off because of recession. Britain has just announced an annual subsidy of \$320 million to keep nearly a quarter of a million unemployed youngsters busy and quiet. Washington has committed \$15,900 million to the same purpose over the next two years.

Western Europe's education and manpower planners, on the lookout for new ideas, are watching with interest and admiration a set of Canadian work and training projects that display much inventiveness and concern — yet are essentially as irrelevant to the causes of youth unemployment as less-imaginative experiments carried out elsewhere.

Fresh thinking by the Department of Manpower in Ottawa had previously inspired initiatives by governments abroad, as in the case of Britain's youth-employment scheme launched late in 1975 under the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and modelled on Canada's Local Initiatives Program. The LIP project, started in Canada in 1971, was concerned mainly with traditionally-high seasonal unemployment during the winter months. The idea was to finance labour-intensive work projects designed to improve the standards of community life on a non-profit basis. About 100,000 people have been employed under the Government-financed scheme — building bridges, repairing buildings and giving advice at public consumer centres.

Canada is going much further this time, and the EC may well follow suit. One fresh Canadian project, launched in June in the context of the national manpower strategy, which has attracted much attention here, will provide secondary-school "dropouts" with nine weeks' exposure to work to help them to decide whether to return to school or to enter the labour market. The program is run in co-operation with local boards of trade and chambers of commerce. Ottawa is to pay 50 per cent of the wages involved, to a maximum of \$500 a person.

The winter component of the scheme will be concerned with school-leavers who are likely to find it very hard to obtain or hold employment without special assistance. They will be offered nine weeks of work experience, subsidized by the administration, with employers participating in the program between October and June. Another project planned for this summer is to provide Government finance for established organizations, groups and municipalities that are creating seasonal employment for students in activities of community value. One condition of the program is that the jobs should relate to the career plans of students and should ease their eventual entry into the labour market.

Government departments are also instructed to set up new work projects in their spheres of responsibility without duplicating existing operations. Students may be employed in such tasks as cleaning up rivers. The aim is to create seasonal jobs that give students an element of physical and mental challenge in a practical work-setting.

Full-time secondary and post-secondary students are to be offered work-related education courses in industrial

*Top of agenda  
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