

Adjournment Debate

plummet even further. Lost hope, lost dreams, lost generation. Such a denial of the right to work is unjust and leads only to depression.

[*Translation*]

If the Minister of State is not concerned about the plight of young Canadians, the Governor General of Canada is very much concerned about it. Mrs. Jeanne Sauvé feels that Canada must find ways and means to solve the unemployment problem among its young people, failing which they will become a lost generation. As a matter of fact, she emphatically stated, and I quote: "If we do not manage to solve our young people's unemployment problem, we are going to lose a whole generation. That is very serious." That is exactly what I personally told the Minister recently. It is a tragedy!

[*English*]

To this end, Mr. Speaker, I ask what kind of encouragement, what kind of concrete measures this Government and the Minister are providing young Canadians. Is it through budgetary cuts to essential programs; through a witch hunt with respect to unemployment insurance beneficiaries to save a hypothetical \$200 million; through statements to this House to the effect that "the Government has only so much money to spend on direct job creation"? That is, \$200 million. Is it through statements that 85 per cent of young Canadians are able to function normally, thus neglecting the reality that the level of unemployed youth ranges from 18 per cent to 22 per cent and is particularly bad for visible minorities?

My riding office is now filled with young Canadians who await the result of the Minister of Employment and Immigration's consultations, who count on her promises, and who are acutely aware of the impact any decisions she makes will have on job prospects in 1985. Yet here we are two days away from the Christmas recess with not a word being uttered as to the fruits of the so-called consultations. There are no structures in place to be implemented for next summer's programs, and again not a word of protest from the Minister of State for Youth.

The serious impact on your youth and students with the abolition of the Summer Canada Program of \$85 million does not go unnoticed by our youth, their parents or our society. Consultation continues but no decisions are made. Yet there is a desperate need for jobs now. Long term alternatives are fine, indeed, and desirable, but this does not diminish the urgency of the present situation and the need for programs now.

When the Minister of Employment and Immigration cannot take positive action for youth, can young people rely on their Minister of State for Youth to do so? When the Secretary of State acknowledges a freeze on the Canada Student Loans Program, can the students rely on their Minister of State for Youth to protect their vital interests? If the Minister cannot challenge or effect change with respect to youth employment programs, if she cannot have any responsibility with respect to the major concern of jobs and employment, then how can our youth feel that their interests are being heard, that they have a voice and be encouraged?

This Minister does not even respond in the name of youth, and protest when a previous Liberal Government youth training program involving \$1 billion and creating 100,000 First Chance jobs gets cut to \$27 million and provides a mere 3,000 to 4,000 on-the-job-training programs. Job training is just one answer, representing an ongoing process. The Minister could be encouraging increased Canada Works Programs where many meaningful activities for society can be presented in order to meet unemployment needs.

Furthermore, young Canadians are tired of getting only promises. In the past, summer employment programs for youth would have been announced before Christmas in order to allow young people to plan ahead. Instead, cuts and complications concerning the Canada Student Loans Program have been announced which could ultimately prevent students from obtaining the education necessary to pursue a financially rewarding career. It is a vicious circle; no loan, no summer program, no education, no job.

● (1820)

In the recently released list of grants for the International Year of Youth only one of the 22 projects—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Charest): I regret that the seven minute period is over.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Andrée Champagne (Minister of State (Youth)): Mr. Speaker, as the Hon. Member pointed out, the mandate I was given by the Prime Minister is twofold. I am responsible for co-ordinating the Canadian Government's program of activities for International Youth Year, and I also speak on behalf of youth in Cabinet and in the federal Government.

I see this coming year as a unique opportunity for all young Canadians to strengthen their perception of themselves and of their potential. I want to encourage the full integration of all Canadian youth in society and to make adult Canadians aware of the situation of our young people and realize that they have a positive contribution to make to society. We must realize, and it cannot be said often enough, that there is no such thing as a lost generation. We must have confidence in our youth. We must encourage them to take advantage of opportunities when they arise.

Mr. Speaker, I believe all my provincial counterparts share my views. During our meetings in recent weeks, they confirmed that in the course of the year, they intend to focus on what young people have been able to achieve so that this will act as a stimulus for young people who have been less fortunate.

The program for International Youth Year is based on these considerations and consists of five points. First of all, its purpose is to help support any initiatives the Youth Secretariat may undertake jointly with Government departments or agencies.