

*Unemployment among Youth*

not have had very much political impact. The leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Lewis) said in a statement made on January 11, 1972:

Opportunities for Youth is a worthwhile approach and I cannot think of a single good reason why it should be limited to students—

**Mr. Rowland:** That is the problem.

**Mr. Faulkner:** The hon. member says that that is the problem. It is a little difficult to detect, from the range of criticism I have listened to in committee from various spokesmen of that party, that their hearts are really in the statement that it is a good program and should be available to everyone. However, I will take them at their word that they think it is a great program which should be made available to everyone.

**Mr. Rowland:** An "E" for effort.

**Mr. Faulkner:** I want to deal briefly with Opportunities for Youth as a program—because, as I said, it had been brought into the debate—some of the thinking behind it and, more particularly, some of the criticism as well as some of the doubts expressed by members of this House about the young people.

It was in the first instance an attempt to get away from simply make-work projects which could be made available in the public service. I think both the government and the young people were agreed that make-work projects were not particularly useful to either of them.

The government has shown wisdom in getting away from the more conventional, more comfortable and more easily administered summer-type program. We went into something far more experimental and innovative. It was simply a response by the government to the claims young people were making across this country that there were things to be done in communities which private enterprise could not do, or was not doing, that municipalities could not afford to do or were not doing, and which voluntary agencies did not have the funds to do.

The young people suggested that if these projects could be undertaken, not only would they provide meaningful work for students but they would benefit the community in which the projects took place. That was the principle behind the Opportunities for Youth program. It is open to certain criticism because not everyone agrees what constitutes useful projects in any given community. No one is more aware of that than I am, because I have had wide-ranging discussions on the philosophical meaning of usefulness with members of all political parties. I realize that between some members and myself there is a rather large gap in our understanding of what that term means.

The point is, however, that despite that apparent risk and despite the differences of opinion which are bound to arise, the government conceded as an act of faith and as a commitment to the young people that their contention was correct and that given the resources they needed to carry out these projects, the community would benefit, they would benefit generally and they would contribute to the growth and development of the country. That is what Opportunities for Youth fundamentally is all about. It is certainly a student summer employment program, but it is not simply a make-work program.

• (2140)

It is a program designed to provide resources to young people to carry out the sort of things they believe are important within their community. It is very easy to knock it, to enter into a discussion about the Opportunities for Youth program in general on the basis of one particular failure. But that type of argument is counter-productive because it tends to ignore the tremendous number of very good projects that are going on across this country.

Let me turn to another charge often made, the charge of alienation which is often incorporated in this type of debate. It is a glib and easy charge to make. The whole matter of alienation has never been more seriously challenged than it has been by two government programs, Opportunities for Youth and the Local Initiatives Program. If there are two government programs which we have introduced that have been understood, supported and welcomed by young people across this country, it is these two.

I suggest that the charge against this government that somehow we are contributing to the alienation of our young people is a phony charge that cannot be supported. If anything, this government has done much more than any other government in the western world to recognize the priorities that exist in the minds of young people. The concerns they have about their country are different, not simply because they are young but because their whole upbringing has been different, a point which has been made by the hon. member for Selkirk.

The government has recognized this fact and it has therefore provided resources for young people, to prevent not only the alienation which would naturally occur if we did nothing but to allow for the participation of young people in the growth and development of their community and their country. The charge that alienation is rampant among the young people of this country cannot be supported and substantiated by the facts.

I say, further, that this government has gone beyond simply meeting this particular problem through the two programs. Speaking about the priorities that have clearly come through these government programs, I could cite what has been done on the pollution front, the leadership exercised by this country in Stockholm which has struck a responsive chord in the minds of thousands of young Canadians because it is a priority they share with this government.

I suggest that the whole business of redefining the concept of jobs—a matter which the hon. member for Selkirk raised—is implicit in the OFY program and LIP, and something which the Minister of Manpower and Immigration has recognized on several occasions. It is easy to make these charges but I suggest that the record of this government, not only in these two particular programs but in others, demonstrates that the government has provided an opportunity which has been provided by no other government in this country, and no other government that I can think of outside this country, to involve young people in a participatory role within society, not as young people and as a select group, not as pampered children of the wealthy but on the only rational basis, as