

Young people between the ages of 15 and 24, as I have said, have suffered the most from the Liberal government's ineptitude. In 1967 the unemployment rate for this group was 6.5 per cent. Unemployment for young people has now soared to 13 per cent.

Bill C-19 gives no indication that it recognizes the special problems of young people. For that matter, it offers no special help for other groups that have been hit hard by unemployment, including women, native people and the handicapped. While in 1979 unemployment among men was 6.6 per cent, the unemployment for women was 8.8 per cent.

I gave some of that background because I thought it would be wise today to contrast what the present Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) has said, both to the press and in this House, concerning the matters that are before us and which are partly touched on in Bill C-19, with what I suggest a much more effective minister of employment and immigration said in this House on December 13, the very day the previous government was brought down.

● (1750)

An effective minister of employment and immigration, Mr. Atkey, recognized that the young are among the hardest hit by unemployment. He said, and I emphasize this again to those backbenchers who had a hand in that decision on December 13:

Youth suffer much more than their fair share of existing unemployment. For example, in November of this year—

He is referring to 1979.

—while youth made up about a quarter of the labour force, they also accounted for almost half of the total unemployment figure.

Mr. Atkey also recognized how crucial it was to find jobs for young people, since they are so easily discouraged. He recognized that the problem was not just economic but that there was a social and human element involved. When young people are unable for a long period of time to take an active place in society, their values and their attitudes about themselves and society are profoundly affected.

The then minister of employment and immigration went on to say:

Our concern stems from recognition of the importance that finding and keeping meaningful jobs has for the self-esteem and future labour market experience of young people.

There is substantial evidence to indicate that the early labour market experience of individuals has a significant bearing on their later employment and income record. The youth of the "baby boom" generation now makes up over a quarter of the labour force. Over the next few years this group will move rapidly into the mainstream of adult workers. For example, by 1985, it is expected that youth will make up only 23 per cent of the labour force, compared with more than 26 per cent in 1980. Under these circumstances, it is particularly important that young people acquire the skills and attitudes now that they will need to lead satisfying and productive working lives as adults. Above all, this government does not want to create another generation of UI and welfare recipients. Our young people are capable of far more, especially in a nation so well endowed with natural resources and human capital.

Mr. Atkey continued:

Although solid work experience in real jobs is important to all youth, the truly vital factor, especially for young people who have not had the advantages of

higher education or formal skill training, is to land that first job. This can be critical to his or her ultimate success because it provides that all-important starting point. And, in that connection, I firmly believe that an authentic job in the private sector is going to be more credible to potential employers than a job on a government make-work project, about which many employers tend to be skeptical, if not downright negative.

Mr. Atkey went on to state:

What we are looking for here is to help those young people who are at a real disadvantage and who most need the help. We do not want to repeat some of the experiences under programs such as Opportunities for Youth and the Local Initiatives Program where in many cases elite groups or middle and upper class youth were able "to do their own thing" at the expense of the public purse with little lasting benefit to the country or the community. By involving tried and true organizations which have already demonstrated their ability to direct services to those who need them most, we feel there will be less emphasis on innovation for its own sake and a much better opportunity to undertake projects of lasting benefit to the community which will provide relevant work experience for youth.

Mr. Atkey went on to propose specific programs to help young people find jobs. This is what we have yet to hear about from the present Minister of Employment and Immigration who is, presumably, concerned with other things of a more personal nature. For example, this minister has not told us what Mr. Atkey said on the very day that the previous government was defeated. Mr. Atkey said:

We will be establishing a youth employment secretariat to provide the direction that has been lacking in the past. This secretariat will monitor existing programs and co-ordinate them to ensure that duplication is reduced and that they are meeting the real needs of Canadian youth.

As an additional means to ensure that youth employment programs provide the best value for money invested in them, the youth employment secretariat will work to harmonize federal youth employment programs with those of the provinces. One of the first tasks of the secretariat will be to ensure co-ordination of temporary employment programs for the spring and summer of 1980 to accommodate the thousands of young students expected to come onto the labour market at that time.

Bill C-19 says nothing about helping young people find jobs. That is the tragedy of what happened on December 13.

Mr. Atkey's commitment to youth did not exclude a concern about other groups in society that face particular difficulties in the labour market. For instance, he recognized that women have a hard time entering the labour force. In addressing this issue, he said:

The participation of women in the labour force has been rising rapidly and continuously in the post-war period. This trend is expected to continue for some time to come. Although this human resource is one of our strengths as a nation and an economy, for too many years the talents and abilities of Canadian women have not been fully used. One measure of this is to be found in the fact that, although women account for about 39 per cent of our labour force, they also make up about 47 per cent of the unemployed. Moreover, women frequently suffer from job segregation and low wages when they do work.

Such barriers are gradually being removed and my department is embarking upon a major campaign to speed up the process. We are encouraging women to train for all kinds of jobs, including many of which, for too long, have been regarded as male preserves. A good idea of the potential of this exercise can be seen at such projects as Syncrude in Fort McMurray where women in hard hats are an integral part of the work force.

Again, Bill C-19 does not express any concern for the specific problems of women in Canadian society. Nor did Mr. Atkey forget about the special problems encountered by the handicapped and native peoples. On this topic he said:

Those of us who have good fortune and good health too often forget not only the problems, but the employment difficulties of those who are physically or