

ment statistics that some program had to be introduced. They were finally convinced we were going to be in for a serious winter unemployment problem. All the directors of the various departments were issued orders by the government to dust out their drawers, bring their programs forward and the government would throw in some money. What they threw together was the LIP program.

• (1120)

Of all the people who applied, and mainly from the communities which were the most structured in terms of formal organizations, a very small number were selected for approval. They were selected by the government's appointees. Today the minister is admitting that these same project co-ordinators have set themselves up as some great omnipotent body and they have decided that of the projects which were selected a few have made a particular contribution and they will be refunded. What has happened to all the projects which were rejected between October and the deadline for accepting projects in January? All those Canadians, thousands of them, community leaders, church leaders, Lions clubs, community councils, municipalities, who submitted projects have automatically been eliminated from any further consideration by the government. This is unfair. Certainly the projects which were submitted in October, November, December and January and were rejected should be given some consideration. Those people were encouraged and activated. Their informal leaders were given some hope. The government rejected them in January and they have rejected them automatically again. This is a very serious matter. I say there are thousands of Canadians across this country today who are frustrated by the haphazard way in which the government has gone about project selection, and again we are seeing a continuance of it.

The government today is admitting once again that it has been able to make a significant impression on unemployment. They applied a band-aid in October with their Local Initiatives Program. We welcomed that because we realized there was a need for some sort of short-term program. Today we are getting another band-aid applied to the band-aid they applied in October. This is exactly what it is. There is no indication of any long-term program which can be built on and which will result in the recurrence of employment opportunities in another year. The government has a responsibility to the Canadian people to come through with much more than this type of short-term, ad hoc program. Certainly, on the eve of Monday, May 8, we are looking forward to the unveiling of a much more comprehensive government program which will take care of unemployment in a significant way. This action is not going to resolve the problem. It will result in a tremendous amount of bad feeling among Canadians across this country who have been automatically eliminated from the program as a result of the restrictiveness announced by the minister today.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, it is obviously impossible not to welcome even the little that the minister has announced. But I wish to say to the hon. gentleman and to the government that it is difficult to think of anything less that could have been done.

Local Initiatives Program

I understand that there are about 3,800 private programs approved under LIP and about 1,800 municipal programs, making a total of 5,600. Apparently the government has already decided that only about 1,200 of them are to be extended to September 30.

The original Local Initiatives Program as an answer to the unemployment problem was obviously ridiculous, obviously nothing. The present answer to the unemployment problem this summer is even less than that: 1,200 projects will probably provide less than 10,000 jobs at a time when there are well over 600,000 unemployed and the University of Toronto Institute, to which I referred yesterday, has forecast unemployment rates of over 6 per cent, seasonally adjusted, throughout this year and 1972. Therefore I want to make it very clear that while my colleagues and I are glad that at least 10,000 more Canadians will be able to have three or four months' work with pay, we cannot help but condemn the government for its lack of imagination in dealing with a problem so pervasive throughout the country.

If the Local Initiatives Program was of hardly any help at all in solving unemployment, it was imaginative and it still is imaginative to the extent that it has enabled local people to decide on their own programs and to participate in a meaningful way in doing something for the community in which they live. But many communities have been left out. Many applications have been refused. Many municipalities have not had what they believe they should have had; many of the provinces have not had what they believe they should have had.

Instead of extending the entire program for a few months to give the government time to think of a permanent program of this kind to involve young people and others in an ongoing way in providing not only work for themselves but service to the communities in which they live, the government has come down with what is typical of this government—and I say this with regret—something more about which they can boast on the election hustings either this summer or whenever the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) decides to call an election. Therefore I suggest to the minister that this is totally unacceptable as a solution, even in the narrow range of LIP. There are about 4,000 or more projects now under way that will have to be dumped on May 31. The criteria proposed by the minister in his statement are, to me, almost incomprehensible. I do not know what he is talking about in any one of the three criteria. I do not know what they mean in the language he has used, and to the extent that they have meaning it seems to me that they are the wrong criteria on which to base the program.

The people involved in LIP have co-ordinated themselves into a committee and there was a meeting in Toronto last night. Some of these people visited Ottawa today and met with members of parliament. They have pleaded that their programs be extended and that the program be made a permanent part of government action involving local people. I think it is shameful that the minister has not been able to announce more than this minuscule of a program.