

Employment Programs

We are in an era which probably has the highest number of students in Canadian history. Predictions are that the number of students will decline somewhat but at present we are going through the bulge period. This is why the government has tried in many ways, particularly last year and this year, to provide employment opportunities to students during the summer months. It is difficult to find jobs for all students but there has been more input by this administration into student employment than by any other government in Canadian history.

I also commend the private business sector and the many firms which are employing students during the summer months. We should not give the impression that it is the duty of the government of Canada to employ all our students in co-operation with provincial governments and municipalities. I commend businesses, be they small or large, which have made employment openings in their operations for the youth of the country.

Many commendable student employment programs have been accepted this summer, in spite of the criticism of some. There is always criticism, because no one is perfect in this world. I am extremely proud of one program in my area which is designed to provide recreation for mentally retarded children and adults. When it was first mooted it was suggested the project could not be accepted because it involved bus transportation, but eventually the policy was made flexible enough to include transportation for worthy projects such as this.

I well remember my university days, hitch-hiking along the roads of southern and northern Ontario looking for summer employment. I know on a first-hand basis what this is like. At that time we did not have a student loans program. Hon. members will recall that the student loans program was initiated under the administration of the Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson in co-operation with the provinces. It has proven very successful and has been continued with greater support by the present government.

If you are starting a business, Mr. Speaker, you need a great deal of what is known as bridge financing to carry you over the difficult period when there is no income coming to the firm. I think the student loans program is the bridge financing for our youth today, because the government not only pays the interest up to and including six months after a student graduates from university but picks up the tab for those who for one reason or another do not pay back the loans. The program enables students to continue at university and receive an education.

There is one strong suggestion that I wish to make to the government. It is that in order to assist students—as I say, the largest number in Canadian history—over this difficult period when some of them cannot find employment, the government should place more emphasis on guaranteed student loans in order to bridge their being financed through university and in cases where there is real need, where parents cannot contribute, the policy should be made more flexible with the government backing higher loans for individuals, particularly in cases where students have not been able to make much money during the summer months.

[Mr. Hopkins.]

We hear a great deal today from the treasurer of the Province of Ontario who feels that if Ottawa persists in many of its present policies then perhaps the province should opt out of some cost-sharing programs. There is one definite project I would like to see the province opt out of, and it is in the field of housing. At present the federal government is putting up 90 per cent of the money that is being poured into provincial housing corporations across Canada, with the provinces providing the remaining 10 per cent. But at every public housing project you see a notice which reads: This is another housing project by the province of so and so. No mention is made of the contribution by the federal government.

I would gladly agree with the treasurer of the Province of Ontario: let us pay the other 10 per cent and let the people of Canada know that not only is the federal government willing to pay 90 per cent of the cost of this housing but it is willing to pay 100 per cent, and have the program brought under federal jurisdiction. Let us get out of this game of petty politics.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It being six o'clock, I do now leave the chair to resume the same at eight o'clock p.m.

At six o'clock the House took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The House resumed at 8 p.m.

Mr. Hopkins: Mr. Speaker, at six o'clock I was discussing the federal-provincial housing program with which I disagree. To follow up the comment made by the provincial treasurer of Ontario to the effect that they may want to get out of some cost-shared programs, I hope this does not mean that it is his intention to introduce in Canada a policy of economic separation on a provincial basis.

The industrial complexes of central Canada, British Columbia, Alberta, etc. are being called upon and will be called upon in future to hold this country together economically. Wherever the tax base is, that is where the tax dollar must come from to help Canadians in other parts of the country and to keep the country on a sound basis. We must not forget that the have-not provinces use their money to buy goods from the industrialized areas of Canada and therefore deserve some return in the form of the tax dollar.

We have been talking about youth employment and employment in general, but one matter that seldom comes up in debates in this House is that of employment on the farm. We hear a lot of criticism about Bill C-186 from the Conservative party and others in the House.

An hon. Member: It is Bill C-176.

Mr. Ricard: You should learn the lesson.

Mr. Hopkins: This bill provides for the maintenance of employment of young farmers in the rural parts of this country. In a statement in the Ontario legislature in