

come of that conference. It is quite possible that he will be much more useful there than he would be here, if past experience is any guide in this matter.

The principal problem, both for the general public and the members of this House, is to get any clear cut information on the mysterious events in the Opportunities for Youth program. As hon. members may recall, a few days ago I mentioned the fact that it was absolutely impossible to get any answer from the minister to various letters and telegrams. On April 16, I wrote the minister a letter with regard to the program. On May 25, I sent him a telegram asking why I received no answer to the letter. On June 2, I wrote him again. On June 3, I wrote him once more, and finally on June 9, I sent another telegram. All these went unanswered until this morning. Perhaps it is a little more than coincidental that this morning, after exactly two months, a letter arrived on my desk from the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) in reply to the various letters and telegrams I sent him, and in reply to questions that I had put to him here in this House on successive occasions.

His letter did not come from Victoria; it came from Ottawa. But one might have thought it came from Victoria because it was dated June 9, and today is June 16. This week my province joined in the assured mail delivery program inaugurated across the country by the Postmaster General (Mr. Côté), which assures next day delivery from one major centre to another major centre. It is great to get assured mail delivery across the country, but I wonder if Your Honour or the Postmaster General would check on the assurance of delivery between the Centre Block and the West Block of Parliament, and find out why a letter on this important matter should take a full week to arrive. Even the most archaic form of transportation existing between those two buildings should have been able to facilitate faster transportation than one week for that communication. But perhaps that is typical.

Not too many days ago the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin), dealing with statistics that are being gathered by the DBS, said they were not using the mail service in rural areas because they simply could not count on it. Maybe that is the reason much of the elaborate public relations material being foisted on the public with respect to the Opportunities for Youth program is being handled by that well known firm of MacLarens rather than by Information Canada. Perhaps the minister responsible can tell us later in this debate why it is that Information Canada is considered an ineffective instrument to convey information about the operations of Opportunities for Youth to the general public. These are just a few of the questions that many people in this House, and in the Press Gallery, have with respect to the program.

Perhaps the most obvious question that can be put at this time is why are we bothering to have a debate when obviously the money allotted for the program has been allocated, when the program is already implemented, when it seems that little can be done at this point to deal with many of the inadequacies, inconsistencies and mismanagement of the program. Mr. Speaker, I think we

Opportunities for Youth Program

would not be doing our job as representatives of the Canadian people if we failed to register the strongest possible protest in this chamber about the misleading and disorganized operation that has directly and indirectly affected hundreds of thousands of Canadian young people. It will not be good enough for the Secretary of State, his parliamentary secretary, or other ministers to say, "Blame it on the press, they love to find scandals", or, "blame it on the opposition, they always love to criticize anyway." It will not be good enough for these kinds of second rate responses to come from government benches with respect to a program that has been, and I believe still is heralded as the flag ship of the government's program to alleviate the massive problem of student unemployment in 1971.

I suppose the word has gone out to find some scapegoats. If the scapegoats are in the Press Gallery because they do their job too well, or in the opposition because they dare to raise responsible criticisms about many inadequacies and shortcomings, that may get the government safely off the hook. I would say that all of us in this House are excited about the possibilities of many worthwhile projects that have been accepted. The imagination that has been fired in the minds of young people, and their enthusiasm about doing creative things in their own communities, should excite and enthuse every Canadian.

We are told that roughly 2,400 such projects have been accepted. It is not possible, and we certainly cannot do it in today's debate, to look at each of these in turn, and to judge its adequacy. But we do know already that some of these projects are of a dubious character, and we want to be told much more clearly than we have been in the past what criteria have been used for the acceptance and rejection of projects. If 2,400 projects have been accepted, then nearly 11,000 others have been rejected, and from personal knowledge I know that many are projects that would excite and fire the imagination of any person, no matter how dull his vision might be. I am concerned about what we have done in playing fast and loose with the enthusiasm and ambitions of youth. I am sure members of the House would not want to see this kind of program, rather than enthuse and inspire young people, effectively disillusion them and make them greatly cynical, really before they have had a chance to get out and to work full-time in their own occupations.

Since it took office, the government has talked a great deal about such things as participation and consultation. I recall that in the last election campaign the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) ran under the banner of "Come work with me." What we have seen in the past six months would not encourage any person concerned with young people, or young people themselves, to believe the government was living up to that kind of slogan.

Hon. members will recall that a few months ago the Canadian Council on Social Development called a special conference on summer opportunities for youth and transient youth. It was a conference at which provincial representatives, representatives of various youth organizations, and of the federal government would gather together. The conference was planned for early this year.