

Company of Young Canadians Act

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, especially since the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) introduced Bill C-171, I have noticed that he seemed to have much difficulty. I almost feel sympathy for him because he inherited a situation for which he is not directly responsible. Considering how reluctant he and the government were to take action, even before the press conference by Montreal's Executive Committee Chairman, we are inclined to believe, as regards previous statements, that the Secretary of State, the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) and the government were aware of the activities of certain members of the Company of Young Canadians.

For these reasons, we must censure the government for not having acted vigorously enough in this situation.

I still remember quite clearly the time when the Company of Young Canadians was set up, and the objectives that were laid down for it. These were outlined in a statement delivered by the Secretary of State on October 22 last, and I quote:

According to the act adopted by parliament in 1966, the basic objective of the Company of Young Canadians is to support, encourage and organize programs for social and economic community development in Canada through voluntary service. The Company may engage in community development work, in urban and rural areas in Canada, and it may organize programs designed primarily to widen the social and economic opportunities of Canadians. The result is that inevitably the Company of Young Canadians works with urban renewal, rural poverty, and other less privileged groups of society.

And I wish to emphasize a few words in the minister's statement:

—rural poverty—

He therefore admits a weakness on the part of the government which has failed to give all Canadian social classes the place they are entitled to. I feel that when a sovereign government, such as we expect in our Canadian democracy, creates agencies and exerts no control over their activities, it is a sure sign of general inadequacy.

● (8:20 p.m.)

In order to solve the poverty problem, the government finds nothing better than to rely upon unexperienced young people, by granting them a more or less considerable budget, depending upon one's own point of view. As a matter of fact, they are given a free hand without any guidelines as to their terms of reference.

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The bill under study provides for the appointment of a comptroller of the Company of Young Canadians and an amendment has already been moved. I prepared one myself that I am going to move if the rules allow me to propose a subamendment. In any event, I shall come back to this later on.

As regards the guidelines that the government should have given this company when it was first created, no reference is made to them.

I have here the minutes and proceedings of the committee on broadcasting, films and assistance to the arts, which following Mr. Saulnier's statement, looked into the activities of the CYC. The hon. member for Témiscamingue (Mr. Caouette) asked Mr. Vidal the following question, and I quote:

Mr. Vidal, according to your answer, it is quite obvious that the Company do not know too well where they are going. Besides your statement says:

1. There is no definition of volunteer and the very concept of volunteerism.

2. There are no clearly-defined lines of authority and responsibility within the Company of Young Canadians.

4. There is no clear definition of the relations between the three levels in the Company.

5. The Company has never set a program objective from which priorities and criteria can clearly emerge.

6. The Company has never had a full set of policies. For instance:

1. There are no guide-lines for the setting-up of new programs.

2. There is no rule as to the duration of a project.

3. There is no organization policy.

It would be hard to say whether we are centralized, regionalized or whether the organization is set up at project level.

7. The concept of participation has never been sufficiently explained or indeed, resolved.

Finally,

8. The role of the director is not defined.

This is the very statement made by Mr. Vidal to which the hon. member for Témiscamingue referred, and Mr. Vidal never denied he had made that statement. This is exactly how things went within the Company.

The committee report brought before the House on December 5, reads as follows, and I quote:

v. Your Committee has evidence that the Executive Director of the Company is seriously hampered in the performance of his duties. This situation results from the following factors, among others:

(a) The Company has no policies on the qualifications required of volunteers nor any definition of their exact role and functions;

(b) There is no policy on the recruitment of volunteers;

(c) There are no policies on the training of volunteers;

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