

I might point out that the initiatives undertaken by the government were as many and as varied as the desires of Canadians. Last year, besides Opportunities for Youth there were no less than 12 other employment and activities programs. I fail to see any basis in reality for the hon. member's contention that we have not and are not responding to the needs of youth and those of society as a whole.

The Department of the Secretary of State has programs dealing with second language training, hostel services and group travel. The Public Service Commission of Canada provides career-oriented summer jobs in all departments of the government. The Department of Manpower and Immigration has provided jobs and training for youth in student manpower offices and in Canada Manpower centres. The Department of National Health and Welfare administered three programs, one of which provided scholarships for Canada's young athletes. The Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce provided young people with an opportunity to work in industrial research projects. The Department of National Defence provided youth with a chance to gain experience in the militia, cadet and civilian training areas.

● (2320)

Mr. Speaker, I could list more initiatives by this government; however, I see my time is drawing to a close. I would simply like to point out that this Liberal government has provided programs for its citizens which are second to none in the world. No other government and no other party has shown the initiative, the creativity and the concern for human needs that this government has. The fact that many government departments are involved in the planning and administration of summer employment and activities programs merely shows that no one department can claim youth as its special clients.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I should like to quote the Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner) when he said:

Youth is not a homogeneous group and never has been. Young people are as different from one another in their interests, their ambitions, and their abilities, as are the members of any age group. Neither is youth a distinct class concerned with its own problems and separated from the rest of society. Young people in this country wish to seek solutions to the problems that affect their communities generally, and not the members of their age group alone. This growing awareness by youth that their ties with all Canadians are much stronger than any differences, has an important lesson for us all.

We in the Liberal government feel that all government departments should be involved in servicing the needs of all its citizens. No other government in any country can match our record in responding to the needs and desires of its citizens of all ages.

SOCIAL SECURITY—ALLEGED FAILURE TO INCLUDE  
OVERSEAS SERVICE WITH ARMED FORCES IN QUALIFYING  
FOR OLD AGE PENSION

Mr. G. H. Whittaker (Okanagan Boundary): Mr. Speaker, on January 7 I received a copy of a letter which one of my constituents received from the regional director of old age security in Victoria. I read from it as follows:

For our purposes we cannot consider you as physically present in Canada when we have confirmed that you were overseas with the

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Canadian armed forces from June 8, 1940, to March, 1946, and in addition left Canada again in November, 1946, the old age security act does not permit us to consider overseas service as physical presence in Canada for old age security pension purposes.

When I read that I said to myself, "What an outrage". I immediately sent a copy to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) informing him I intended to ask a question regarding this from the floor of the House the next day. My question was:

Can the minister confirm to the House that it is the government's attitude at this time that overseas service with the Canadian armed forces cannot be considered as physical presence in Canada for old age security pension purposes, and therefore those who served Canada overseas are placed at a disadvantage compared with those who did not serve overseas?

The answer given by the minister was:

It is not a matter of a government attitude, but of legislation voted by this parliament many years ago, including Old Age Security act, and the provisions of this act apply not only to the armed forces but to all persons who leave Canada for any reason whatsoever, whether they be religious organization members, civil servants or private business employees, to name a few.

After cries of "Shame" in the House, the minister went on to say:

Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that several hon. members are crying "shame" about their own legislative record since this act was voted by parliament.

However, Mr. Speaker, regulation No. 15 of the Old Age Security Act provides that an absence from Canada by members of the armed forces in relation with their work will not be considered as an interruption from residence here if they return to Canada after having completed their duties abroad.

As for the other problem, I am studying this matter and I hope to have an answer on this subject.

I asked this further question:

In view of the minister's answer, and having regard to a case currently before his department pertaining to this matter, will he undertake to look into the situation and report back to the House as soon as possible?

The answer the minister gave was:

That is exactly what I said a few minutes ago. This is a matter which I previously considered within the forthcoming review of the Old Age Security Act. However, in view of the opposition we are encountering with respect to the passing of a number of amendments to the Canada Pension Plan, by way of systematic obstruction on the part of some hon. members of the opposition, I wonder at what speed—

That was the end of the minister's answer. Who are the veterans of Canada to believe—the minister's officials or his half-answers given in parliament? Does every veteran of this country have to come to his member of parliament to get the justice he deserves? The minister said in part of his answer that regulation No. 15 of the Old Age Security Act provides for an absence from Canada by members of the armed forces, in relation with their work, and this will not be considered as an interruption from here if they return to Canada after having completed their duties abroad. This man has complied, yet he is denied. What an outrage that veterans are being denied their overseas service! I am willing to have every veteran write me, and in their interests I certainly will take up their cause in the House.

The minister goes on to explain in his answer the progress of other pension legislation such as the Canada Pension Plan. It is the minister's perfect right to play party politics with the veterans of this country, but I cannot