

agree with some of these criticisms, and have pointed these out to the minister in committee on various occasions.

If there is to be an Opportunities for Youth program, we must ask ourselves two questions: Is the aim of this program that of promoting socially useful tasks, or is this purely a make work program? If the program is one of enabling young people to perform socially useful work, we run against the problem of its being a temporary program. It lasts for the summer months and ends in September. My hon. friend pointed out that most socially useful works are ongoing. You do not do them for two months and then fold up and leave the people whom you were serving high and dry. The program fails in this regard.

If it is meant to be a make work program rather than one that is socially useful, it is a failure on that score. Why do I say that? We find that students on the average, employed in OFY projects save only about \$600 over the summer. That will not go far towards paying for university tuition and residence fees. So, it is clear that the young people entering OFY projects come from our middle and upper middle income groups. Part of their fees come from OFY projects, and the rest is supplemented by their parents. We find, in the result, that non-students, the disadvantaged, young people coming from lower income categories, do not participate to such a great extent in OFY programs and are at a distinct disadvantage. In that sense there are some distinct drawbacks to this program, if it is to be considered as a temporary one.

We must also look at the criteria for selecting participants in OFY projects. Again these questions are decided without parliamentary reference. Clearcut criteria are not established by the members of this House, who are responsible to the electorate.

Examining the history of the OFY program will convince one that it is the organized, usually university students, those coming from a more favoured socio-economic background, who know the angles and obtain the grants. They are the most articulate, the most familiar in dealing with government bureaucrats and in drawing up forms and making representations, and they are the people who get grants, as opposed to non-students, or young people who come from lower in the scale socio-economic background.

One criterion for selection is that the group shall have community support. That sounds good. But how do you define community support? Is it what the local council will tolerate? Often some adventurous and worth-while programs are considered too radical by local politicians or the establishment, or whatever you want to call them. So there are drawbacks in this area as well.

The Local Initiatives Program also is a make work program. Indeed, many worth-while projects have been brought forward both by individual groups and municipalities. In my constituency I am thinking of dedicated people who are involved in the Big Brothers organization, in the mental health group and in the self-help group for the disabled. That kind of project is useful. Yet what happens? Come the spring, their budget runs out, and there is a mad scramble for an extension of grants, for carrying on their worth-while projects.

Appropriation Act

In passing may I mention some of the criticisms I have heard about the federal Local Initiatives Program. One problem is that the amount a person can earn is limited to \$100 a week, I believe. That is far too low, as in many unionized towns such a wage will not compete with the going labour rate. If our young people are to engage in worth-while projects, let us make the rate realistic. Further, the application form with respect to LIP projects is a horrendous one, and, compared with the provincial scheme, the federal scheme lacks flexibility in that it is difficult to adapt a project to day-to-day requirements.

I was informed of a city which had entered a LIP application, heard nothing about it and then, a few months later, got a telephone call from Ottawa. The city was asked if it could start and be ready to go in a few days. City officials were given two hours to make up their minds, contact people, interview others, and hire them for the project. I ask, what chance has a member of this House to bring forward criticisms to responsible officials unless criteria governing selections are hammered out here in the House of Commons?

I understand from the Secretary of State (Mr. Faulkner), speaking in committee and from press reports, that the government is considering merging Opportunities for Youth, Local Initiatives, and New Horizons into one program. It is trying to counter the criticism that these programs are not ongoing. The merged programs will provide work and fulfil socially useful tasks.

If the new program is to operate all year around and no longer be temporary, as were the OFY and LIP programs, it seems to me, before we agree to its being made permanent, that it should be scrutinized by the members elected by the people of Canada, the members of this House.

In his motion the hon. member for Esquimalt-Saanich (Mr. Munro) suggests that programs such as the ones I have talked about ought to be incorporated in a statute. We could examine these programs in the House and, presumably, in committee as well. However, speaking as a new member of this House, I am disturbed by the way our committee system works. I have often sat on a committee studying the estimates of various departments, only to find that members questioning officials do not really want to know where this \$100,000 or that \$1 million is being spent. They did not have the background data for such questions.

● (1730)

What tended to happen in committee was that someone would hunt for some dirt to embarrass the minister, or questions would be vague generalities. The estimates, totalling millions of dollars, would get cursory examination and be passed without too much scrutiny. It disturbs me that members of parliament pass departmental estimates, often amounting to millions of dollars, without knowing exactly how the money will be spent.

If the hon. member's motion is accepted, I do not think it will really solve the issue unless we solve the very basic problem of the committee system and how it is working. I am not alone in this opinion. Members must have more research facilities. We should have research people to provide the necessary background on government spending. The Auditor General has indicated there is a real