

Unemployment among Youth

the government should realize the fact. The government should be preparing itself to act because these demands will become clear and will have to have a response.

A third major trend I see developing in response to changing attitudes toward work are demands for altering the organization of our places of work so that they suit, not the demands of machines which they contain but, rather, the needs of the men who are operating those machines.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Order, please. I understand that by a special arrangement I am to call hon. members to order after 15 minutes. I regret to inform the hon. member that his time has expired.

Mr. James Hugh Faulkner (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, I suppose if this debate so far has served any useful purpose at all it has served at least the purpose of exploding the myth, I hope once and for all, that the Opportunities for Youth program is this government's total response to youth unemployment. Not even the hon. member who moved the motion subscribed to that notion, a notion that is as silly as it is false but one often perpetrated in other parts of the country as a means of criticizing the government.

The brunt of our argument today was handled by the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Mackasey); the motion deals with youth unemployment and that is precisely as it should be. The Opportunities for Youth program is not central to this debate at all, but is only one part of the student summer employment program. To the extent it has been brought into the debate it should perhaps be referred to briefly. The government has met a relatively small section of student summer employment through Opportunities for Youth. It has never been presented to this House or the public as more than that; it is simply part of the student summer employment program.

I congratulate the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Rowland), who made a very thoughtful speech about the malaise among non-youth or non-students and the degree of attention which students are receiving from this government. He raises, I think quite rightly, the sort of uneasiness and frustration which exists in these people's minds. He uses terms like "special grants to special groups." Frankly, I do not know how any government can possibly avoid at least giving the impression that special grants and special groups exist so long as our educational system is so structured that on May 3 in respect of universities, and on June 30 in respect of high schools, a whole lot of our youth are out looking for jobs.

• (2130)

How can we avoid dealing with special groups with special grants when our educational system is so structured? The government would not be very responsible—and I am sure the member who introduced the motion would not subscribe to the idea—if it did not provide special grants to special groups, if it ignored the students and let the Manpower offices deal with both the army of students as well as those who represent the heads of families. It would be an abdication of responsibility to do this. No government can fail to recognize that so long as our educational system thrusts these students out of

[Mr. Rowland.]

school all at the same time, it would be an abdication of its responsibility not to try to meet their legitimate needs for summer employment.

Another myth was not very effectively destroyed today. It was, in fact, further perpetuated by the hon. member who moved the motion and who said that jobs had gone, not to students who needed them but to students who did not need them. I strongly suggest to the hon. member that he get out and meet some of the students who have been working on Opportunities for Youth projects. He will find, after talking to them, that they do need the summer employment, that they are not all sons of wealthy parents and that they do have financial obligations. I say, with deference, that his statement this afternoon was made out of ignorance.

In point of fact, we have made a greater effort this summer than we did last summer to get to the disadvantaged families and to the rural areas. I think it will be demonstrated that the Opportunities for Youth program this summer will be much more successful than in the past—although it has been successful in the past—in getting to the sort of students who are financing themselves through university and whose families in many cases do not have the necessary resources to support them.

I think it is a disservice to suggest, as the hon. member did this afternoon and as his party has in the past, that somehow this is a middle-class operation pampering the children of the wealthy, and so on—implying that it is a waste of money. The facts do not bear this out. Even a cursory visit to any of these projects would establish that this is not a charge which could be made with any credibility against the Opportunities for Youth program.

The Opportunities for Youth program is simply a summer employment program. It is not the total answer. I suggest, however, that the summer student employment program demonstrated a considerable degree of courage and leadership on the part of the federal government. Although the federal government gave the leadership, this program elicited the support of not only the provincial government but of most municipalities and the private sector. I think it is fair to give the government credit for having led the way and for having launched such a program so that this particular problem of student summer employment could be met.

I find the position of the opposition to be somewhat contradictory. On the one hand they condemn or criticize the program, yet pretty well uniformly say that what they really want, despite their criticism, is more of the same. I might go back to the position formerly adopted by the spokesman on these matters of the Progressive Conservative party, the official opposition, the hon. member for Egmont (Mr. MacDonald), who issued a statement following the announcement of this year's summer employment program congratulating the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) on the early announcement of summer programming for young Canadians and pointing out specifically:

—the many criticisms and suggestions offered by various concerned groups as well as the opposition have obviously been heard and incorporated by the minister in OFY 72; this type of approach cannot but be in the interest of young Canadians everywhere.

That is a very encouraging statement. I do not know why they criticized the program in the beginning. It may