

*Borrowing Authority Act*

stage in life. And the International Youth Year will in many respects be a North-South challenge. In southern countries we know the vast majority of the people are below 25 and that group is increasing in number faster and faster. For that reason, when referring to the young people's involvement in those countries, we mean involvement by the majority of the people. In Canada as in a number of other northern nations, the ratio of young people to the total population is far smaller. In 1981, only 19 per cent of the total population were in the 15-24 age group, and 10 years from now, they will account for only 14 per cent.

Despite wide social differences, both northern and southern countries are experiencing unemployment and underemployment problems, and must meet the challenges of technological changes. We want to ensure that the International Youth Year does not go unnoticed in Canada. I would like to take this opportunity, as we should, to correct false perceptions and give the young an opportunity to do something for their country and the world. I would now like to turn to the matter of young people's involvement. A 1980 survey on volunteer work indicates that from February, 1979, to February 1980, some 218,000 young people aged 15 to 19 and some 210,000 young people aged 20 to 24 were doing volunteer work. Overall, although young people account for 25 per cent of the work force, only 15 per cent do volunteer work. There are some implications in those statistics, more particularly in the area of government relations with the volunteer sector. That sector of course is one of the key components in our democracy. It is through volunteer work that a number of people develop their leadership abilities and value system. The abilities so acquired are highly valuable to the country.

As volunteer work is done at the grass roots, it is a most precious indicator of social conditions and the needs of people. Furthermore, volunteer groups play a major role in policy development and formulation. Often, they are at the source of innovations and point to emerging concerns. In view of the importance of that sector in our nation's life, it is essential that young people play a role that is commensurate with their place in society. This certainly is not now. Both the government and the leaders of the volunteer sector should therefore look for ways to stimulate their involvement in that most formative kind of activity. What is needed is action initiated by the young rather than designed for the young. Although useful, the latter cannot be compared with those where young people have a chance to take initiatives and in so doing to develop their leadership abilities.

Then there is the matter of youth and leisure which should also require our full attention. I am referring especially to the participation of young people in cultural events. In this respect, it will be most interesting to read what the Applebaum-Hébert committee will have to say in its report which, I am told, should be tabled within the next few months. Mention is often made about the culture of young Canadians which, admittedly, is an important component of our cultural life. Young people

are more involved in sports and physical education, and their artistic and musical tastes are altogether different. We should help young people develop their creativity, which means assisting young authors and artists financially and devising ways and means of scouting for new and promising talents. An effort should be made to establish the reputation of our promising young authors and artists as well as help them establish closer ties with their elders. As I said, youth is but a period in life, but our young people should not be isolated from the rest of our population. Any youth-oriented policy should take into account their creative impulse and the fact that for a great many young people, the transition between adolescence and adult life is very difficult.

While the death rate for our people as a whole has been decreasing over the past 20 years, it has slightly increased among teenagers and remains somewhat constant among young girls. Accidents and suicides which account for approximately 80 per cent of the deaths among young boys and nearly 60 per cent among young girls are the two main causes of death among young Canadians. Suicide ranks as the third main cause of death and is responsible for 16 per cent of all losses of lives in the 20-24 age group. According to these same statistical data, most losses of lives among young people result from their life style and surrounding related causes, as opposed to natural causes. Which makes us realize the necessity for developing a policy which truly meets the needs of all our young people, whether they are disadvantaged or well-off, disturbed or well-balanced.

There exist now various government programs which meet the needs of young Canadians, including Open House Canada, Katimavik and many others developed by the Fitness and Amateur Sports branch. One way or another, a number of departments are offering programs which are of utmost importance, including the Department of National Defence, the Armed Forces, the Canadian Employment and Immigration Commission—with all its initiatives—also the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, together with its programs for young Indians, so young Canadians are receiving indeed a lot of attention. The only problem is that the left hand often does not know what the right hand is doing. And only young people who are well-off are made aware of these programs. The information is not easily available, and no booklets have been distributed by the Government of Canada to inform young Canadians of the programs being offered to them. They simply don't exist, and there is no over-all philosophy. I am thinking for instance of Open House Canada where hundreds of applications from young Canadians anxious to discover their country are turned down each year; and yet, in view of the problems we are now faced with in the areas of national unity and regional inequalities, this program should be generously funded. Expenses on advertising, should be cut and young Canadians should instead be encouraged to discover the reality of their country, Canada.