

Company of Young Canadians Act

Publicity has been given to the affairs of the Company in Toronto and Montreal. Recently, all those engaged in the Company's Cape Breton project resigned en masse, even though they knew the general guidelines which this bill would set. For these and many other reasons, members of the Conservative Party who served on the Broadcasting Committee, having listened to all the evidence of the witnesses—and some of it was conflicting—in effect filed a minority report.

Under the rules of the House they could not file a minority report as such, but they issued a press release on December 5, the day on which the committee's report was filed, stating that they did not support the committee's report and that they felt the reality of the situation dictated that the CYC should no longer be considered a credible agency to try to undertake social work with youth at the community level. I wish to read into the record a portion of that press release, beginning with the third paragraph as follows:

The fundamental reason for the present difficulties of the Company was the continued failure of the Pearson and Trudeau governments to follow the direction of Parliament, as expressed in the legislation. It is basic to these difficulties that the Company of Young Canadians was run by a provisional council from its inception on July 11, 1966, to October 4, 1969, when the permanent council was appointed. This more than three year period of stewardship was the incubator for many of the Company's present problems. The Liberal government cannot escape its responsibility for a failure to provide sufficient interest and support to the Company throughout its life. A quick perusal of the shortcomings, as set out in the report, reveals as sad an indictment of mismanagement and lack of control in a federal agency, rarely seen, if ever admitted.

Accordingly, for a variety of reasons, the Company of Young Canadians—in many cases through no fault of its own—is no longer credible for social action at the community level.

Since it has become clear that legislative changes are necessary, we feel that the Company of Young Canadians should be phased out, and the federal government should appoint an independent body to review the experience of the past three years, consult with those involved, and other agencies, so that the original concept of social action with youth and government to give a voice to the voiceless, can be carried out by a new organization, without the liability of the old. Further, we understand that the Secretary of State presently has a 12-man task force within his department studying the entire question of youth and its involvement with government. Obviously, such a study should be integrated with, or at least co-ordinated with, a study of the Company of Young Canadians.

It is naïve, or idealistic, or perhaps a combination of both, to think that a parliamentary committee which only sat, intensively, for three weeks,

can right the wrongs, and recommend policy changes, which others more intimately involved have ignored, or failed to do for over 3 years.

It is obvious that the Company has developed a bad reputation despite the good intentions of most of its sincere and dedicated volunteers. Such a reputation will not be corrected by legislative changes, and the fear would be that a trusteeship, labouring with the present problems of the Company, might very well pollute and irrevocably pervert the original concept and objectives behind the act.

We say it is time to be realistic, not just idealistic, and call a spade a spade. In view of the past history and present reputation we doubt if the most objective trustee can successfully impose a different structure, even radically revised, on the original frame of the Company. That frame has already been bruised and battered and any such grafting attempt, we fear, would create such a mutation that it could very well adversely affect the future role of youth in any social action at the community level.

• (4:00 p.m.)

We believe that if the government carries out the suggestions of the committee, then the Company of Young Canadians is dead de facto, if not de jure, and so it is thus reasonable to start afresh from square one.

In admitting this reality, there is no breach of faith with youth.

I am coming back to the point the Company is dead, anyway. If there is any doubt that the Company is dead, evidence can be found in the debate.

On the contrary, we believe a fresh start, building on the experience of the past, can develop a viable and constructive outlet for youth in social action at the community level, which will far exceed the present legacy of \$7.2 millions spent on 38 ongoing projects which involved not more than 400 volunteers in its troubled and turbulent three year history.

Our primary belief is that volunteer service for youth is still as valid an aim as it was when we supported the concept behind the Company of Young Canadians. Surely, however, we have all learned that good intentions are not sufficient to prevent the abuses that arose in the company's operations. We endorse a new start after proper study.

This statement was endorsed unanimously, Mr. Speaker, by all members of the committee including those of my party. If there is any doubt about the statement, after reflection and having considered it in light of Bill C-176 which we are now debating, the doubt is removed. At least we are admitting the reality of the CYC as envisaged by Mr. Pearson and as spoken of by many members opposite. However, the concept of the voluntary member, which was so important to the whole purpose of the Company, is completely removed by this bill which I say makes the Company dead in reality, if not in law.