

*Proceedings on Adjournment Motion*

zenship programs (Mr. Stanbury) the following question, as reported as page 6207 of *Hansard*:

In view of the large numbers of young people now travelling in Canada, is the government considering a program to provide capital assistance for youth hostel facilities?

I went on to explain that I asked this question owing to the fact that the current program is restricted to operational assistance. I was very much surprised when the minister answered my question in three words, namely, "No, Mr. Speaker". I should like briefly to review some of the factors involved in this brief exchange.

Over the last two or three years there has been a very sharp increase in the number of young people travelling across Canada and using a variety of means of unconventional travel, one might say. In particular, many young people are hitch-hiking their way across the country during the summer months, in this way seeing their country. One of the reasons they have taken to the roads is that they have a great deal of difficulty obtaining any sort of suitable employment, indeed any sort of employment at all in many cases.

Last year the government responded with its program of assistance for facilities for overnight accommodation for many of these travelling young people. This was of tremendous assistance for the most part. I understand use was made of government facilities such as armouries. This year a somewhat different tactic was adopted in respect of this program. A program was established to provide assistance to various communities and groups but the government decided to rely more heavily on local community initiative in the establishment of various facilities providing accommodation for young, travelling people.

● (10:10 p.m.)

One feature of the grants provided by the federal government under this youth hostel program is, as I indicated earlier—I refer now to a government statement issued by the department which was kindly supplied to me—that grants can cover salaries and operating expenses but cannot cover capital expenditures. That is a flat prohibition in respect of assistance for capital expenditures.

The reason I asked this question was not because I had any expectation the government had a program ready to announce yesterday, today or tomorrow, but because it seemed to me perfectly reasonable to expect that the department would now have looked at this problem from a long-range point of view. It is obvious that this new phenomenon is going to continue. It will be with us for some time and the department should be looking at it from a longer-range point of view.

I also want to make it clear that I am not suggesting we have to rely entirely or even primarily on government assistance or initiative for the establishment of permanent facilities for travelling young people. It seems to me the government does have some responsibility and could provide a very useful service if it took the initiative now in studying this matter and carrying on discussions with interested groups and people in order to arrive

[Mr. Burton.]

at a method whereby the federal government could provide assistance and encouragement to groups and communities who wish to establish permanent facilities and accommodation for young people who are travelling, particularly during the summer months.

I hope the minister will indicate tonight that his department intends to look at this matter with a view to developing some means to encourage discussion among communities across Canada and the development of means to provide stimulus for and encouragement of community efforts in the provision of satisfactory facilities.

I also asked a supplementary question concerning alternative means of assistance this year toward the provision of facilities in communities where difficulties have been encountered in obtaining approval from municipal authorities. The minister indicated there are a number of ways in which assistance can be provided to communities in this regard. I hope the department and the minister will take advantage of every possible opportunity to encourage communities to provide these facilities, and that they will in fact develop other possible means of communication with communities across Canada in order to arrive at satisfactory arrangements. I include MPs in this category.

I draw to the minister's attention that my colleague, the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin), and myself issued a statement last week in which we indicated our unhappiness with certain developments in the city of Regina regarding a planned program there. Unfortunately, with regard to my own city the council saw fit to react on a short-term basis, with a short-run view of the situation in response to a request regarding the establishment of a local hostel. It seems to me that a little leadership by the council and interested parties could have been given to overcome the fears of the local citizens. In this way a satisfactory program might have been established which would in fact have benefited these young people. This could have been a credit to the city of Regina and Canada as a whole.

Thus, I hope the minister will look at these programs in terms of continuing the assistance undertaken over the past couple of years. I hope he will take a long-range view of this matter.

**Hon. Robert Stanbury (Minister without Portfolio):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for raising this matter which is of considerable concern to me and to the citizenship branch. As the hon. member mentioned, last year the federal government for the first time undertook to assist communities to cope with the presence of transient youth and also to help young people travelling across our country find accommodation wherever they might be. This year we have doubled the budget for that kind of assistance, but we do not yet feel we have enough funds or enough information to launch a program of capital assistance. I hope, as I think the hon. member does, that some day Canada will have a national system of hostels, although not necessarily sponsored by the government. I hope, rather, that it would be in the hands of voluntary organizations as I believe is usually the case in European countries.