

Katimavik: govt stalls again

Comment is an opinion column open to members of the university community who wish to present an informed opinion on a topic of their selection.

This spring the federal government announced the creation of Katimavik, an "action learning program" designed for the 17-22 age group. The program was heralded as an opportunity for Canadian youth to help "build a better Canada" for \$100 a month. This program seems similar to the former Company of Young Canadians but is decidedly non-political in nature putting youth in the community as labourers rather than as organizers of social action. Public opinion varies greatly about the government's motive.

by Kris Klaasen
for Canadian University Press

The federal government may be helping the young to "find themselves" through its Katimavik program but it's not helping them find much else.

Self-discovery comes cheap. Even the feds, offering a dollar-a-day for this latest makework brainchild, will attest to that. However, trying to get jobs at a living wage is another story. According to Statistics Canada, about 20 per cent of students not returning to school are unemployed and roughly 14 per cent of those who have gone back couldn't find work this summer.

Unfortunately, tales of job-finding woes aren't the kind the government is interested in. Instead, it opts for testimonials from the thousand or so participants, aged 17 to 22, who are expected to complete the 10-month Katimavik work camp stint. For the kids hearty enough to finish, that's when the big payoff comes—a \$1,000, lump-sum reward. Undoubtedly, the program's initiator, minister of defence Barney Danson, expects his too in the form of testimonials.

However, both parties should beware.

For Danson the gamble is how

many participants will make it. The writing may already be on the wall. After a slick, month-long spring ad campaign, and an extended deadline, only 3,800 of an expected 12,000 applications trickled in.

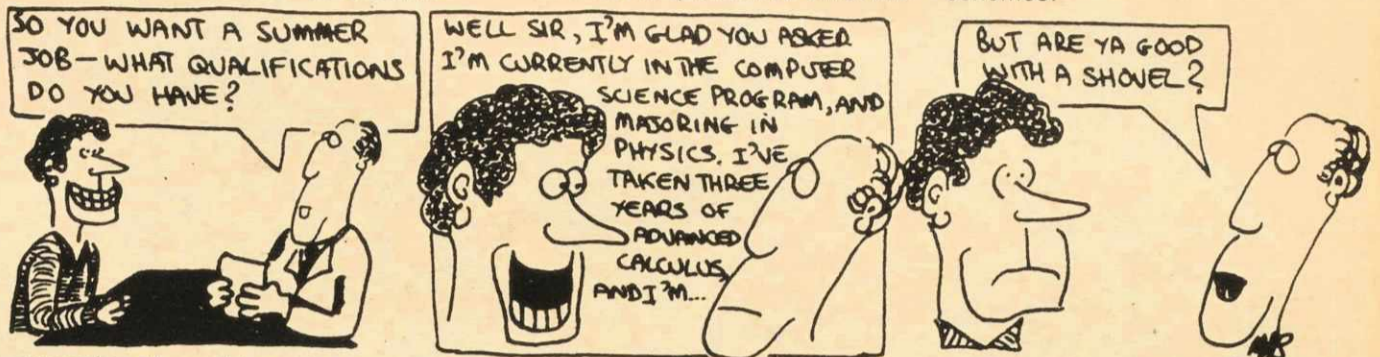
The resultant pushed-back completion date could also pose a problem. Without sufficient time to evaluate the program, the government may be unable to counter

have the right to jobs which will contribute both to their personal development and the much needed economic development of the country."

The 1950s baby boom was no secret. Massive expansion of the post-secondary education system in the 1960s was actively encouraged. Our leaders should have considered the questions: What are

we going to do with them all? How best do we use this resource?

The current solution is a stalling tactic while the government crams for a test it should have been prepared to meet years ago. Whether it continues to stall or introduces solid job creation programs will be seen in the spring when it decides the fate of Katimavik or similar schemes.



unemployed youth's early-summer rumblings with an expanded program next year.

The biggest losers will be the Katimavik kids. Those who finish and collect the full sum, which averages out to \$3.30 a day, will find that it doesn't cover next year's tuition and expenses or provide much of a cushion during the search for scarce jobs.

Billed as a "challenge to youth," the program provides no answers to young people, faced with unemployment and financial barriers to post-secondary education. Instead of giving them work at a decent wage, it puts young people in tents and shifts them around every three months to act as, in the case of the National Capital Commission, a source of cheap labour.

The National Union of Students has condemned Katimavik for encouraging "unfulfilling work camp employment for young people who

Another opinion Hard to criticize

by Sheena Masson

"Katimavik". Just saying the word in company produces ready arguments pro and con. Few who know anything about Katimavik are neutral. Those who defend Katimavik regard it as a unique educational experience which teaches young people responsibility, practical skills and most importantly - about themselves. Katimavik is criticized by others, notably the National Union of Students, as an unrewarding "work camp" which does nothing to help the unemployment problem.

The facts about Katimavik at least are uncontroversial. Its aim as put forward by the co-Chairperson is to provide young people "with the means, the resources and the support to start acting today on improving our quality of life." To attempt to realize this, 1000 candidates were chosen from across Canada to participate in a 10-month "action-learning" program which began this August. Participants live together in group houses where all necessities are provided, and travel every three months to a new region of Canada.

The work camp is definitely one aspect of Katimavik. The group presently in Halifax is restoring walls for Parks Canada at York Redoubt, studying at the same time the ecological reasons behind their work. A second aspect of Katimavik outlined by the organizers is group life which I had the opportunity to observe for myself last week. This involves setting up a living environment where people cook, clean and share other duties - in a word, co-operate. Group life also stresses self-sufficiency by means of what is officially called Appropriate Technology. What this means in actual terms is that the individual groups decide on a project relevant to improving our quality of life, such as windmill generators or dams. The group I visited is building a greenhouse heated at night by stored solar energy.

One day a week members participate in a community service of their choice such as work at the Ecology Action Centre or with handicapped people. This third aspect does expose them to jobs they might be interested in later though this is not why it was implemented.

The fourth and final aspect of Katimavik is the least tangible—Personal Development. This involves a

personal growth and awareness and sharing of skills. One skill that had definitely been actualized in the group I interviewed was bilingualism. Half the members are French, half English yet all 10 spoke freely in either language.

The point behind explaining these four aspects in detail is to show that none implicitly try to be a job substitution. Kris Klaasen, in his comment, points out that "trying to get jobs at a living wage is another story". That's just it - it's another story. At no point was it suggested either in the material I read or the leaders I spoke to, that Katimavik is meant to be a source of employment (it hardly is, at a dollar a day). Klaasen bases the entire article on this mistaken belief which he seems to have lifted from NUS. Perhaps if Klaasen had made the effort to form his own opinions he could have criticized Katimavik validly.

The aims of Katimavik stress that it is a learning experience, a form of education (supported by the government like universities, as it were). Klaasen's, "Well, where's the money?" attitude does not apply to the general participant. The group I spoke to were not looking for full-time jobs being just out of high school or a year out of university. They were looking for alternate education and hope Katimavik will provide this.

Right now it is hard to criticize Katimavik because the program is not over. It must seem that I am one of the ardent defenders but actually mine is a more neutral position. All the aspects I agree are worth while. But if I ask myself would I join Katimavik—the answer is no. The aims of this program can be developed for some in a group situation. For myself, however, the tight-knit atmosphere, the continual awareness and reminders of ones aims would be a hindrance.

For now it is impossible to criticize Katimavik for something it does not pretend to be. In seven months from now, however, when the program is over we should be hearing more about it. That will be the time for critics to speak up depending on whether or not the ideals of Katimavik have been realized. If Katimavik succeeds through the committed individuals in it, the government will have succeeded in originating a truly far-sighted program.

Council out of control

by Keith Evans, Student Council Law Rep

Of late, one often hears that the government in Ottawa is out of control. How can one say the same about the rather small, petty bureaucratic government of the SUB? Easy!

To begin, one can literally say that the Student Council is reactionary, not in the philosophical political sense, but in the sense that it does nothing but react to what has already happened. There are no long range plans, no initiative taken by Council members, no foresight as to problems that may arise.

For example, take the recently created Housing Secretariate. The function as seen by the present secretary appears to be that of finding accommodation for the current year, with little long range thought, (which was the initial purpose of the Secretariate). Any major impetus is from non students—they come from our mini civil service. This is of course the natural result of the fragmentary Student Council structure—it merely exists for one year, then dissolves.

As an example of inefficiency, look at entertainment policy. We have a full-time entertainment director. Yet still, we insist on maintaining special events chairpersons who are expected to expend Herculean efforts for a small honorarium. In recent years, it has

become increasingly difficult to find someone willing to take on the task. If we insist on having a staff person to handle entertainment, why not be efficient and incur less cost, by having the staff person handle everything? The special events committees could still exist to give her direction.

What ineffectiveness? consider the fact that in appointing committees, council relies on "living" memory of someone present at the meeting to outline what is involved regarding the committee. How can committees operate effectively in this atmosphere? There is no document which lists which committees exist and what their functions are. Clearly, a basic organizational manual is required to achieve effective continuity. There isn't even a common master file at Council offices. At one council meeting this year, Council had to appoint a Committee to find out and clarify what were the purposes, principles, and procedures of the Non SUB Capital Fund. Something must be wrong. There is no overall co-ordinator nor proper implementation procedure for decisions.

I think the situation is out of control. Maybe that's not entirely correct—since how could one control something that you are not quite sure about in the first place? Right now, I can't come up with a solution. I hope someone can.