

*Adjournment Debate*

that an equitable proportion of OFY grants go to the youth of various income classes, especially to young people of low income families?

The problem, as I see it, is that we have a government designed and implemented program which is called Opportunities for Youth, but in reality it has become a program of opportunities for students and mostly students in the middle and upper income groups. If we look at some figures for 1971—I am sorry that I do not have the more recent, 1972 figures, if indeed they have been tabulated—we see that the percentage of young people unemployed ran at 15 per cent for post-secondary students and at 20 per cent for non-students.

In the same year we find that 62 per cent of the applicants for Opportunities for Youth grants were post-secondary students and only 26 per cent were non-student applicants. Of the post-secondary applicants, 68 per cent were successful in their applications, but of the non-students only 17 per cent were successful in receiving grants. Therefore we see that students have a greater acceptance rate than non-students. This is readily understandable. The students are more articulate; they can formulate their briefs much better than the non-students and hence enhance their chances of being selected.

We have a problem of goals. A program that began as Opportunities for Youth, in practice has become opportunities for students. I want to know, is this official government thinking? We have hints that it may be. In the 1971 task force report at page 29 we read:

The first objective of the program was to provide employment for students . . . the priorities among this target group were post-secondary school students—

If this is what Opportunities for Youth has become, let the government admit it openly, but then let it be fair enough to design another program for the non-student young people, thousands of whom are unemployed, frustrated and angry. The second question I raised earlier asked, did the government consult the provincial ministries of education to determine whether the funds needed for the average student to see him through the year in university were comparable to what OFY was providing? The answer of the minister was no. This soon becomes evident. We see that the average earnings of post-secondary OFY participants in 1972 was \$1,000 or \$1,200 with an average saving of somewhere between \$400 and \$600. Mr. Speaker, such earnings cannot possibly cover tuition and living costs for today's university students. The government has set a maximum earning of \$90 a week for OFY applicants, so even the OFY—or should I say the opportunities for students program—is not meeting the needs of the students.

• (2210)

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to know, first, if the Opportunities for Youth program is now providing primarily opportunities for students. If it is not, what guarantees for equitable distribution of grants to youth of all income and occupational groups is there in the program? I want to know, secondly, if the minister will raise the pay allotted for the applicant so that what he earns can realistically meet the cost of a university education today. Likewise for the non-student, will the government

[Mr. Symes.]

consider giving him an adequate wage so that he can live decently in today's society?

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Marceau (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State):** Mr. Speaker, in reply to the first question as to whether the Opportunities for Youth program has been successful among under-privileged youth with low incomes, I might say that the Opportunities for Youth program has been very successful over the last two years. The funds that were granted to under-privileged youth show the government's concern for this particular group of people. The Opportunities for Youth Program came to grips with the problem of regional, ethnic, economic and social disparities, by granting the major part of the available funds to the young people who were having a hard time finding a summer job and who urgently needed financial assistance.

In 1972, most of the participants, that is 57 per cent, came from rural areas, which somewhat offsets the non-availability of summer employment in those areas. The male representation that was dominant on projects in 1971 was reduced in 1972, and we managed to establish a ratio of 55 to 44 per cent. Although 65 per cent of Canadian students at the post-secondary level came from families with a gross income under \$11,000, over 70 per cent of the participants at the post-secondary level came from families in that income bracket. Over 50 per cent of the students at the secondary level participating in the Opportunities for Youth program came from families with a gross income under \$8,000.

As regards the second question, in respect of salaries, we admit that there were no formal consultations between the federal government and the provincial government. However, I should like to remind my honourable friend that the Opportunities for Youth program is not meant to settle all the employment problems of young people. However, the amount of \$90 is a sizeable amount, nevertheless, and we think it was preferable, with a \$40 million budget, \$6 million more than last year, to try to reach a larger number of young people by paying them a weekly salary that is not the perfect solution but which can partly meet their needs.

And my honourable friend should not forget that only 15 per cent of the summer jobs were filled under the Opportunities for Youth program. Most of them, that is 85 per cent, happened to be filled by the private sector.

In closing, I would say to my hon. friend that young people must not consider the Opportunity for Youth program simply in terms of income but avail themselves of the opportunity to fulfil their personal ideas, to get involved positively in social achievement and to get ready for the tasks of tomorrow.

AGRICULTURE—FEED GRAINS—MEASURES TO STOP  
PRICE INCREASE

**Mr. Léonel Beaudoin (Richmond):** Mr. Speaker, on January 31 last, I directed a question to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) concerning the excessive price increases of feed grains and proteins in eastern Canada.