

of young people getting together and worshipping in the way they do, listening to music or getting turned on, or whatever it is. I am not familiar with the psychology behind this, but there are hundreds of thousands of young people who find the energy to get together and enjoy music festivals, religious festivals, or whatever it is.

I wonder whether anyone has seriously considered challenging the young people through federal assistance, to take part in some kind of activity related to their own future. I should like to see some kind of national conference. It could be called a rock conference, a religious conference, an employment conference or something else. Let us have some type of federal encouragement and federal funding which would enable thousands of our young people, not when the problem is right on us but at some appropriate time, to get together and offer their suggestions on what they believe can be done to help alleviate unemployment among young people. I know the Canadian Council on Social Development had a great many of these young people involved in its survey procedures. However, I have never seen a means by which the young people from each province could get together to spend some time in offering suggestions as to ways in which their own future could be assured.

Too frequently politicians like myself and other members, as well as the Minister in charge of youth, whom we never see in this House—what is his name? I forget his name. It is the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier), the Opportunities for Youth king. I should have liked to see the Secretary of State here today. I know my colleague on the other side, the outstanding minister, the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Mackasey) will be back in a few minutes to participate. The government is also bringing on another heavyweight, the hon. member for York-Simcoe (Mr. Roberts). I am very serious about this. I should like to see the federal government challenge the young people from St. John's, Newfoundland, Vancouver or wherever to come to Ottawa and spend a few days talking about their problems. Perhaps they have all kinds of ideas which we have never really tapped.

I remember a few weeks ago a group of young people from Toronto came to my office. They represented a variety of groups which received local initiative grants. They offered numerous suggestions. I must admit, having listened to them for a few minutes or half an hour, I learned a great deal more about the problems of young people than I could learn from Members of Parliament in the next six years. So, why do we not accept this challenge and offer it to our young people. We could tell them we would sponsor a conference of representatives from the universities, schools, councils of all kinds and organizations, to talk about their problems. Perhaps in this way we would receive a little guidance, because I am convinced that if we have to wait for the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State to solve the problem of unemployment among young people we will have to talk about 1980 instead of 1970.

• (1540)

[Translation]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, the motion introduced by the hon. member for Yorkton-Mel-

Unemployment among Youth

ville (Mr. Nystrom) is very serious since it deals with an apparently insoluble problem. In fact, we have been hearing about it for many years, without any solution having ever been found.

The situation in which young people under 25 must live nowadays is neither very nice nor very interesting to observe. We hear people say that today's youth does not want to work anymore and that is why they are in such an unfortunate situation.

Mr. Speaker, today's young people are our children, just as we once were our parents' children, and they are not so different from what we were. They haven't changed, but life styles have however. Twenty-five years ago, it was rather easy to find a job; today, the number of young people being maybe ten times larger, there is a surplus of young manpower in our country. That some young people do not want to work is not new; we always had them. Those who do not want to work do not include only young people 20 or 25 years old. In fact, some people 40, 50 or 55 years old would rather receive welfare allowances than work. They are not so much better than young people 20 or 22 years old.

However, I notice, Mr. Speaker, during my travels across Canada, that our young people are interested in their country, that they want to become part of the Canadian society, if they can, if they are permitted to do so. This is exactly the permission they cannot find.

A while ago, the mover said that 250,000 young people less than 25 years old are unemployed. Yet, these are young people qualified to work and seeking employment. At this time of the year, 1,400,000 students ask permission to work during the summer months in order to continue their studies in the fall, and the hon. Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) came up, after the Christmas and New Year's holidays, with the Opportunities for Youth program to offer some help to young students and young unemployed.

These days, we receive from the Department of the Secretary of State—I do not write them, but we receive them—letters stating that 19,000 serious requests were received and that approximately 3,000 were accepted. About 16,000 projects under the Opportunities for Youth programs have been rejected. Perhaps not a single day goes by without a member of Parliament receiving a telephone call from someone in his constituency asking for reconsideration of a project submitted in January, February or March that was refused because it involved spending too much money on purchase of materials, because all the funds and more have been spent, and so on. No request for review can be accepted because the funds have run out. The minister says: We have no more money. But the young people are still there. As indicated by the letters received, these projects are serious and valuable and would help young people. Unfortunately, we do not have the financial means to implement them.

Mr. Speaker, I do not accept to be told that we do not have the financial means to help the young. They represent Canada's future and we have no right to gamble it away. Our duty is to build the future and not to gamble it away.