

*Unemployment among Youth*

might be difficult to take time for questions, but that is up to hon. members.

**Some hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Doug Rowland (Selkirk):** Mr. Speaker, may I remind you of the motion now before the House which reads as follows:

That this House regrets the failure of the government to produce a comprehensive and coherent program to deal with the growing unemployment among our young people and its disregard of youth's legitimate aspirations.

It is with the latter part of the motion that I want to deal in my remarks. My colleagues from Yorkton-Melville (Mr. Nystrom), Brant (Mr. Blackburn) and Assiniboia (Mr. Knight) devoted considerable time to documenting the disastrous level of unemployment which affects the young people of this country, the lack of opportunities that such a level of unemployment represents, as well as the degrading effect that continued lack of employment opportunities has upon a young person just entering the job market in a work-oriented society.

To be without work in a society that tends to judge a person on the basis of his or her income, to be forced to seek social assistance in a society which tends to believe that it is lack of application—laziness, if you will—rather than lack of opportunity which makes people accept welfare, to be short of cash in a society which tends to equate worth and material possessions, to be unsuccessful in finding employment in a society which still believes in the great myth of Horatio Alger, in a society which tends to forget that circumstances, as well as ability and application, affect the degree of success that a person may achieve, is truly soul destroying.

Many people, I have no doubt, on reading this motion would be totally puzzled by it. Is there not an Opportunities for Youth program which singles out for special attention young people who have already had opportunities for secondary and post-secondary education? Are there not programs to permit groups of young people to visit different parts of the country? Is not the government even offering assistance to kids who are spending their summers hitch-hiking throughout the country rather than seeking gainful employment?

What more do today's youth want? They have been given everything they wanted since the day they were born. They have never wanted for anything. They have never experienced a war or a depression. More government catering to their whims can lead only to more of them becoming bums, living on welfare and taking advantage of the efforts of the already overtaxed working population.

It is almost impossible to avoid having considerable sympathy for these kinds of arguments, especially when they are presented, as they most frequently are, by people who have worked hard all their lives at jobs which may not have held a great deal of intrinsic interest for them in order that they could provide for their families and contribute to the well-being of the nation, as they believed and as they continue to believe is their duty. To them, the young people who are so obvious on our highways in the summer, who are so free in their criticisms of our society, are saying that the people who have taken pride in hard

work are patsies to be exploited, and government programs to assist young people simply confirm such impressions.

Just what is happening, Mr. Speaker? Is the able-bodied young man or woman who is living on welfare payments doing so simply because he or she is lazy, or self-indulgent, or both? Are such young people living on welfare because jobs are simply not available, or is it that the jobs which are available are not to their taste? And do people have the right to refuse work because they do not find it personally appealing, when their refusal means that other people must support them? Or are such young people cynically exploiting their society and justifying that exploitation on the basis that society is hypocritical in the extreme; that while it pretends to honour effort and application, it simply honours wealth, however obtained; that there is no reason to give way to such hypocrisy and that to exploit a society based on exploitation is no sin?

I do not pretend to know the answers to those questions. Like most human phenomena, I do not suppose that it has any single explanation. But I do know, Mr. Speaker, that if there is no change made in the employment pattern that is available to our young people, if as a result increasing numbers take the course of exploiting the welfare system, and if government programs to assist youth continue to be presented in a manner guaranteed to make the public think of them as special grants to a special group rather than as part of an over-all scheme for social development, then very shortly, probably within the next two or three years, this country will be faced with a confrontation, certainly angry, possibly violent, between the working people who carry the tax burden in this country and those young people who, for whatever reason, will refuse to assist or have been denied the opportunity of assisting in bearing the cost of running this country.

We are in the midst of a social revolution of the magnitude of the Renaissance or the Reformation. The major difference between our social revolution and the other two which have now passed into history is the time span in which our revolution has taken place. The Renaissance and the Reformation took place over centuries. Our social revolution is being compressed into decades. Old value systems are being destroyed and rejected with such rapidity that new value systems which might have the potential for providing society with some stability have not yet had time to become fully articulated and understood, and thus remain incapable of acting as replacements.

Values shift so rapidly that I would venture to guess that the gap between the way a person of my generation thinks and the way a person of my grandfather's generation would have thought is a great deal narrower than the gap between what a person of 40 years of age thinks and a person of 18 years of age thinks. Indeed, it may be narrower than the gap between what a person of 25 years of age thinks and a person of 18 years thinks.

• (2120)

Probably just because the majority of young people have never known want, to which I referred earlier, and probably just because the majority of young people have had made available to them opportunities which would have been beyond the wildest dreams of their parents,

[Mr. Speaker.]