

*Adjournment Debate*LABOUR CONDITIONS—INCREASE IN YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT.
(B) ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Hon. Jake Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight on the adjournment debate following the questions I asked of the Minister of Transport (Mr. Pepin) and the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) on June 4, as reported at page 18109 of *Hansard*.

On June 4 the May unemployment results were published. The national unemployment average in Canada stood at 10.2 per cent; double digit unemployment. What was not added to the roughly 1.2 million Canadians were those Canadians who have simply left the labour force and have stopped looking for work or employment. That day I asked what plans the federal government had to address one specific aspect of the national unemployment picture, namely, unemployment for young Canadians between the ages of 20 and 24 years. If one looks at that age group, one finds a startling figure of 20.2 per cent of Canadians listed as a statistic; the statistic that they are unemployed. One out of five people who are entering what we could call adult life, who might just be out of university or technical school with some kind of training and looking for their first job, do not have work this summer. I do not think anyone in the House can accept that kind of statistic. It is easy to say that it is one out of five, but everyone in the House knows young people in that age group who have come and asked how he or she could find work.

There used to be a time when people would say that these young people were not obtaining work because they were being too particular about the type of work they would do. They might be university graduates, for example, who did not want to drive trucks. That is not the case today. When I speak to them, I find that they are primarily concerned about finding some work.

The government and the Minister of Employment and Immigration have said that there are Summer Canada make work projects. That afternoon the minister said that if members of the opposition co-operated we could pass the national training act and we could get people working. That act is being discussed and debated right now. I would suggest that it is going forward fairly well. The minister also said that work-sharing is in place. Yes, for roughly 69,000 Canadians that is so, but that does not add up to 1.2 million Canadians.

I am concerned about that group of young Canadians. That does not mean I am not concerned about other Canadians who are unemployed, but that group of young Canadians has to be drawn into the labour force and has to become part of the market economy. If this is their first experience, one can imagine what attitudes they might have both toward the work ethic and toward Canada generally. It is a concern and a fall-out about which hon. members of the House should be very conscious.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen) said that as we drop inflation, employment will increase. I have news stories here. Although I do not have time to read them all, in an article dated May 11, 1982, in *The Globe and Mail* the heading reads, "Must shift focus to unemployment, MacEachen tells industrial nation." He said in his meeting with the

OECD in Paris that, "Unemployment is likely to rise even further." Those are very difficult signals.

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What I am pointing out to the government today is that while we know about the national training act, Summer Canada and the make-work programs, at the time these programs are all in place the fact remains that unemployment among young Canadians is still going up. That is the fact. Nobody can escape that fact. What plans does the government have in mind to get young Canadians back to work or to work, because it is their first job in many cases? What I am asking, as well, is why the government does not go back to the marketplace to give incentives—not grants—but tax relief for businessmen and businesswomen so they will hire Canadians and create employment?

Forget about the grants system. People come here with cap-in-hand for grants. Those grants come from taxpayers' money and it is an inefficient way of operating. Why not use the approach of having average Canadians investing \$2,000, for example, in Canadian industry to create jobs so they would then get the same tax break as any corporation? Those are some suggestions. We often accused of not making any suggestions. I have just given some.

Mr. Rémi Bujold (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) for his comments and suggestions tonight on the serious problem of youth unemployment. I think that we have to correct some of the figures he has mentioned tonight.

First, according to the latest statistics compiled by Statistics Canada, the actual unemployment rate for the youth group between the ages of 20 and 24 during the month of May was 16.4 per cent. The seasonally adjusted rate, however, was somewhat lower, at 14.8 per cent. The 15 or 20 age group is the one experiencing the highest unemployment rate at the present time, as the hon. member mentioned.

As was indicated earlier, all industrial countries of the world have been experiencing a general economic slowdown during recent years which has resulted in a above average level of unemployment. The Canadian employment situation is merely a reflection of the state of the world economy.

[Translation]

The slow rate of economic growth is responsible for the present relatively high rate of unemployment in Canada. In addition, in May a wave of about 100,000 young people, from 20 to 24, surged on to the labour market. As we all know, this is the yearly crop of post-secondary students who are seeking employment, but despite this fact, between April and May 1982, unemployment among young people between 20 or 24 years of age did not increase. We certainly do not wish to minimize the seriousness of the situation, but I merely wish to point out that it is no use blaming government programs for youth employment, although the member for Provencher (Mr.