

Supply

I do want to discuss the serious social and economic problem of youth unemployment. It is something which has been largely ignored by the government. It is a problem which is not being solved. In fact, if we look at what is happening in Canada today, we find that not only is it not being solved, but it is also worsening. It is an historical problem. It has been around for a long time. If we look back to 1966, we find that youth provided some 24.2 per cent of our labour force. The unemployed in that youth labour force made up 40.6 per cent. If we bring that into more modern times, into 1980, we find that the youth share of the labour force increased somewhat to about 26.8 per cent. Its share of the unemployed in Canada also increased to around 47 per cent. Forty-seven per cent of the unemployed people in Canada are the young people of our country. Since 1966, the youth unemployment rate has doubled the unemployment rate of those in the bracket over age 25. If one looks at what is happening in other countries, one finds that Canada ranked fourth highest of the 12 OECD countries in terms of youth unemployment in 1976. In this country, which has so much potential and opportunity, we cannot create jobs for our young people.

Recent data indicate that from March to April of this year unemployment in the group under 25 years of age increased by 23,000 people. In one month there were 23,000 more young Canadians without jobs and without opportunity. We all know that in the present circumstances unemployment is hitting all Canadians, but the ones who are most severely affected are our young and inexperienced. They are the ones who are hurt the most.

I want to look at the causes of youth unemployment in our country for a few moments. The standard response to the cause of the problem tends very often to be the baby boom. We have more people in this particular age bracket. There is a large number under 30 years of age. However, that is not the only cause. I happen to think that the problem is that the government has come up with inadequate policies to deal with the increased number of people in this particular age bracket. In other words, it has not provided an environment and climate in which to create an increased number of jobs to meet the needs of the larger group of people looking for those jobs. It uses the baby boom as an excuse or justification for not dealing with the problem. In fact, the baby boom probably is partly responsible, but it cannot be allowed to become the total reason or justification for the problem we are facing today.

Mr. Thacker: They knew it was coming.

Mr. Cooper: That is right. All of the numbers and information available indicated that we had to create more jobs for this particular time, and they will become increasingly necessary as we move on through the next few years. The numbers and information were all there, but the government failed to respond in an adequate, meaningful way. The real problem is that the government has given little attention to our youth. It has given little attention to the effect of the baby boom about to hit our country. It has not been dramatically concerned with Canada's future. Its policies have been inadequate, often

ending up as being nothing more than simple lip service to a problem and, at best, temporary solutions.

The root of the problem is probably that the government has created the worst economic conditions for our young people which could be imagined. The budget and the National Energy Program have stunted growth. If one looks at those two examples, one finds what the government has done to job opportunities in Canada. I come from an area which has been dramatically affected by the national energy problem. In our area, we find that unemployment has tripled in the last year. This is not because there is not a demand for natural gas or for our oil. The fact is that the government-created climate of investment in that particular sector of our economy has been destroyed. The result, of course, is that no one is getting jobs. Our young people are looking into various aspects of work in the energy sector, whether it be in engineering, in rig camps or as truck drivers, but it does not really matter in which part of the particular sector they would like to be involved, because those particular jobs are no longer available. It has been the end of business expansion because of the budget and the National Energy Program. It has been the end of the progressive development of our country. Those youths who are now looking for jobs could have and should have been the beneficiaries of the growth which should still be going on in that particular sector of the economy.

Our current conditions probably present the hardest time to our young and inexperienced. If one looks at what happens in any difficult economic period, one finds that the older, more educated and more experienced people will survive. They will be able to keep their jobs. However, when businesses do not have the resources or the climate to risk investment, they will not risk that investment or give that opportunity to young people. They will not gamble. They cannot expand, so the first ones to be cut from the payroll will be the ones most recently hired. Who are they? They are our young people. They are the last to be given a chance with our economic conditions. We see before us a picture that does not look any better. In fact, it looks more and more gloomy as time goes on.

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Traditionally what has happened in times such as these is that our young people have turned to education or training programs. They looked at those as an alternative to present employment. Even those options have now begun to be limited.

If we look in the field of education, we find that the federal government is shifting the responsibility for funding from itself to the provinces. In the province of Alberta alone that will mean a cutback of \$392 million to that province over the next five years. That is what would have been spent in that province by the federal government on education. It has now been cut back.

Alberta, because of its economy, budget and funds available will be able to make up that difference. But what about the other provinces, the so-called have-not provinces? What can they do? What will happen to their universities and colleges? All of us are receiving letters about this. We know what will