

# Unemployment: the all-Canadian

By IAN WISEMAN

An unfortunate side effect of Canada's recent economic recession is beginning to show as university enrollment figures and youth unemployment figures are being tabulated this fall - Canadian youth from the ages of 15 to 25 have no place to go.

The labour force, in these times of high unemployment and the new rash of layoffs (due to President Nixon's import surcharge), cannot accommodate more than 50 per cent of the young workers in the job market.

And university enrolment is down all across the country due to the fact that the economic squeeze has caused a severe shortage in summer jobs for students, tighter money in many families of students, and higher university admission standards caused by provincial governments who cannot afford to subsidize universities to the degree that these institutions have become accustomed.

Furthermore, university students are beginning to realize that a college degree is no longer a meal-ticket to a cushy job: as the number of colleges graduates rises, so rises the rate of unemployment among people younger than 25 years of age. And fewer and fewer grads are getting work in their specific field of gratification.

It is also becoming increasingly clear, in the midst of this economic turmoil, that the proliferation of government task forces, economic reports, and brainstorm youth employment schemes, are really an attack on the symptoms of youth employment. The disease - a capital-intensive industrial society that is restricted by American control of most Canadian industries - continues its cancerous course unchecked.

So now, after four frustrating years of

inflation followed by massive unemployment, the government has set up an interdepartmental study group (the term 'task force' has become passe because of its embarrassing connotations) to form a "brains trust" to study the economy. They will concentrate on high unemployment among youth, and the relationship of this to underenrolment in post-secondary educational institutes.

Projected enrolment for post-secondary institutes this year, you see, was 594,000 students. In reality, the figure is only 519,000. Projected enrolment for universities (excluding the Quebec CEG-EP's) was 341,000. But the true figure is less than 300,000.

Where are the missing students? One thing is certain: they aren't in the labor force. Over half of the 455,000 unemployed persons in Canada today are under 25. This situation has been getting worse for the past ten years: now it is reaching crisis proportions.

In view of this, the Trudeau government has set up its "interdepartmental study group"; but, you may ask, to do what? Yes, it's the same old story; to discover new legislative tricks to cover the problem, and arrive at short term solutions that mend the social fabric briefly, but without ever asking the basic question - why the problem occurred and keeps on recurring.

This year the symptoms of high youth unemployment and low university enrolment are going to be hard to erase. A quick look at the following selected items from last month's daily newspapers quickly dispels the myth that all is right with the national economy:

\*Underenrolment at the University of Calgary forced the Board of Governor's there to implement an immediate budget freeze on the hiring of both academic and support staff. The university, with enrolment almost 2,000 below their projection of 10,600, has committed itself to expenditures which could exceed their known resources.

\*The unemployment rate for people under 25, despite the federal government's Opportunities for Youth Program and the promised economic upswing, was higher in July (10.8 percent) and August (9.1 percent) this year than a year ago.

\*University of Alberta had 1,200 less students than the expected 19,500, and have been subsidized by the provincial government so that they will lose no more than \$500,000 this year.

\*The Kingston city council asked the Ontario government to tighten up its welfare legislation when the councillors discovered that 100 of the 301 single men drawing social assistance in that city were under 20 years of age.

\*Donald McDonald, president of the Canadian Labour Congress, pointed out that the federal government's "Employee Support Bill" would not help stave off unemployment caused by the US import surcharge. The American government could counteract this immediately by implementing its "Countervailing Tariff Law" which prevents subsidized industries from undercutting American market prices. And, after all, the States control North American industries and markets, and they're trying to keep unemployment down in their country, too.

\*Laurentian University in Sudbury froze its budget for thirty days to study the implications of losing \$1,250,000 when only 2,100 students (100 less than last year) enrolled.

\*McMaster University at Waterloo and Carleton University at Ottawa are studying their budgets trying to juggle their finances to keep the books balanced in the face of surprising underenrolment.

These items are an indicator for a widespread tendency among students - they didn't leave the labour market this fall because they either could not afford to go to school fulltime or else they figured that a university education no longer held the certain potential of financial security.

But half of those students found that while they were still in the job market, they had little chance of breaking into the employed labor force. It's hard trying to sell your labor in a capitalist country in times of recession, and a hard economic lesson was learned by many as they waited in the unemployment office queues.

The summer months are traditionally those with the lowest rate of unemployment. Yet in July 514,000 Canadians (out of a total labor force of 9,068,000) were unemployed, for an unemployment rate of 5.7 percent. And in August, 445,000 (out of 8,972,000) were out of work (5.1 percent).

But the overall unemployment rate is artificial in relation to youth unemployment, which is much higher.

The unemployment rate among workers from 14 to 24 was 10.8 percent during July and 9.1 percent in August. Unemployment among persons over 25 was

only 3.5 percent in July and 3.1 percent in August. So government economic policies, while helping workers, have not created jobs for them.

When these figures were released in September, Prime Minister Trudeau and Finance Minister Edgar Snider boasted that the government's fight against unemployment was working superbly for workers older than 25. Trudeau's comment on youth unemployment was that the government did not know enough about youth and "their attitudes towards ex-



isting work ethics" to explain the problem.

A few days later the Prime Minister suggested that the problem was with the teenage group which has entered the labor force" and who, according to him, were not going back to school at their normal rate.

But why are they not going back to school? It's a new phenomenon, Trudeau shrugs, as he sets up another study group to fathom the student mystery. Study