

Good Works

At a moment in Western history when two generations regard each other with confusion if not distaste, the middle-aged men in Ottawa have spoken with at least some success to Canada's young.

Last summer the Government's Opportunities for Youth program provided 27,832 young men and women with an almost confusing variety of jobs — cleaning rivers, mending roofs, compiling history, making movies, gathering statistics and seeking solutions to such difficult problems as drug addiction.

The program was deliberately experimental. The 2,316 projects, in each case designed by the young people who ran them, were picked in some haste last spring out of 13,700 proposals. This month the Government will consider a survey on the program made by an independent committee of 100 and decide if it should be extended and expanded for the summer of 1972.

When the program was announced Prime Minister Trudeau said: "We are saying, in effect, to the youth of Canada that we are impressed by their desire to fight pollution, that we believe they are well motivated in their concern for the disadvantaged, that we have confidence in their value system. We are also saying that we intend to challenge them and see if they have the stamina

and self-discipline to follow through on their criticism and advice."

Teams of youngsters were soon working on some obvious problems of the land, cutting paths through forests, clearing an unusable canal in Halifax for canoists, repairing the homes of the elderly. Others tackled more subtle and difficult problems, providing medical, dental, legal and social services to those in specific need.

Last month the Canadian Council on Social Development made a preliminary favorable report on the program after interviewing 144 persons and groups across Canada; 49 were actually involved in OFY, 27 were indirectly involved and 68 were not involved at all. The report suggested emphatically that future programs "be announced earlier and have a more orderly and defined structure."

The final conclusions of the program's successes and failures are yet to be made, but Canada's Secretary of State Gérard Pelletier said in late summer that he felt the program had "given us a good gauge of what the aspirations of our youth really are." The Secretary, an active man in his early fifties, said it had also given the lie to those who say that young people are an essentially self-centered lot.

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