

Supply

● (1600)

Mr. Jim Hawkes (Calgary West): Mr. Speaker, the only way to describe the last three-quarters of an hour is bizarre. In her response to the question by the Member for Mission-Port Moody (Mr. St. Germain), the Minister stated that she has been concerned about young people who have been unemployed for 20 weeks or longer. She describes them as the drop-outs and is incorporating a special amount of money in her budget to help that population. She says that she hopes to have better answers eventually, when and if Parliament is still sitting and when and if there will be a Minister of Finance to present a budget.

The Minister has been part of this Parliament for over four years. Ministers she has supported have cut out funding for functionally illiterate members of the workforce. It was well over two years ago when the Liberal Party, the Cabinet and the Minister decided to give no special funding for the drop-outs when they become adults. Canadians can only become confused when they see different parts of the Government acting separately. They have trouble finding where reality lies.

On May 23, the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Roberts) issued an astounding press release to the National Press Gallery. In this release, the Government of Canada brags that it is providing a wage subsidy to Imperial Oil to employ approximately 100 young people. No member of the Chamber believes that the young people of this country do not need assistance in finding initial job experience and exposure to the workforce to gain a sense of their future. However, this is an attempt by a Minister of the Crown, who is charged with the public responsibility of administering billions of dollars of public expenditures, to create the impression that the Government played an important role in Imperial Oil's decision.

Let us examine whether the proposal outlined in this press release could be important. The press release states that these young people will be paid up to \$15 an hour and that they will be employed for 52 weeks. It also states that the maximum subsidy can be \$3 an hour. This means that for a maximum subsidy, Imperial Oil gets 20 per cent, or \$3 of this \$15 an hour. In reality, the subsidy can only last for 26 weeks. Therefore, if the job lasts for 52 weeks, Imperial Oil is contributing 90 per cent of that direct wage while the Government subsidizes 10 per cent.

We know that Imperial Oil is profitable and pays a corporate tax at a rate of 50 per cent. Since the subsidy must come into income, that 50 per cent tax reduces that 10 per cent to 5 per cent. Those are the direct wage costs in the case of a maximum subsidy. This does not include ancillary costs like the use of the personnel department and the issuance of cheques.

It is absurd to believe that Imperial Oil would make the corporate decision to hire an extra 100 young people based on what is a maximum 5 per cent subsidy only on direct costs. The Government is proving its absurdity by issuing such a press release and telling Canadians that this is a major announcement about what it is doing in the country to support

youth. It is absolutely incredible. The Government is saying that it is the champion of youth because 100 young people, with a 5 per cent maximum subsidy, have been employed by Imperial Oil. A government which would so rapidly take us toward the theatre of the absurd is incomprehensible.

When the Minister of State for Youth (Mrs. Hervieux-Payette) was appointed, I attempted to ask why that Minister had never been to a meeting of the committee on Labour, Manpower and Immigration. Why did the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) not appoint someone who had been studying youth problems? Why did the Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) or the Minister of Employment and Immigration not take advantage of the parliamentary task force report which was given to them in 1981 after 14 months of hard work, after listening to the youth of this country describe what needed to be done? That task force provided over 200 recommendations for changes in government policy.

It is now 1984 and we see the Minister standing in the House, reading a prepared text and telling us that she is busy studying the problem. She says that she is busy listening to the young people. In the meantime, Imperial Oil will hire an extra 100 young people. Eventually, at some indefinite date, perhaps the fall or 1985, she will make some recommendations to the Minister of Finance and if he is listening and finds room, we will then get a change in policy and the young people in this country will be happy.

The Government would make the young people of this country much happier if it would call an election. Canada's youth have no confidence in the Government, middle aged Canadians have no confidence in the Government and senior citizens have no confidence. Such a climate does not allow for progress or jobs. There is no feeling of the hope, energy or aspiration that once characterized this country.

How did we fall from the second highest standard of living in the world to fourteenth? Our standard of living is still falling. I remember 1976 when Members of Parliament from Alberta warned that jobs would disappear if there was interference in the oil industry. Today I hear the Minister of Youth say in the House that there is not much of a job multiplier effect in the oil industry. The transfer of funds from the western sedimentary basin to Canada Lands has reduced the job content of those amounts four to five times. In other words, the amount spent on Canada Lands to produce one job could have produced five or six jobs if it was spent on the western sedimentary basin. In turn, that would create jobs in Ontario and Quebec. Furthermore, such an expenditure would produce oil and gas and reduce the need to send our hard earned money to Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Iraq and Iran to create jobs there. If the entire purpose of the oil industry is to have Canadian jobs, then Canadians can believe the Minister when she says that this is a sector with no job creation potential because the Liberals' understanding of that sector has made it so. It has created a sector with job loss but very little job creation potential.