



Graphic: Charlatan

Morell continued

When we were visiting these operations, it was apparent that a number of the counsellors understood what we were being subjected to. "Ideally, adjust everything," one of the job corps staffers answered reluctantly when asked whether broader changes were necessary in our society.

However, through the entire morning the one question which university students are interested in never came up, namely, how will more employment for students be created this summer?

Inevitably, for university students the shortage of jobs is a group problem, not an individual one.

But then, we thought, perhaps the luncheon with the Honourable John Roberts, Minister of Employment and Immigration, would give us the information we wanted.

We were wrong. Lunch was held in a Hungarian restaurant downtown, a dark, cavernous and forboding spot which would have been comfortable under the right circumstances.

"Too many flunkies," one of the students said, in reference to the number of civil servants which were around.

We were sitting in a dark table near the back of the restaurant, and only a red light shone. At the very back sat half-a-dozen officials from the federal bureaucracy, including J.M., the conference bagman.

When one of my colleagues was sent to him for a loan, he responded, in his unique way, "How much do you want? Twenty bucks? (pause) Fifty bucks? One-hundred and fifty bucks?"

After we finished eating, the Minister spoke, though he did not say anything of consequence, which was a disappointment.

"We invited you here for a variety of devious purposes," he said. "We want to use you as a means of reaching out to young people."

He continued talking, only just mentioning the Summer Canada grants program and the new Career Access program.

(The Summer Canada program allows groups to apply for a grant to employ students to carry on some community-oriented activity, while the new Career Access program provides employers with subsidies of up to 50% of the wage of any student whom they hire and train in the summer.)

Roberts, in the course of the luncheon, denied that he called the session for political reasons, and he stressed that the appointment of the Minister of Youth was politically motivated only in that it is an attempt to better serve young people's needs, which he said may help the government in the upcoming election.

"You don't want to let it (Year of the Youth) be taken over by Bureaucrats like us We'll do it if we have to, but you should not want that to happen." -- An anonymous civil servant discussing the management of the International Year of the Youth, 1985.

"I think we may need two of us up here," radioed one of the two brown-clad security guards, suspiciously, as a herd of us entered the Canada Employment Centre on the 20th floor of the Eglinton Centre.

We were going to spend part of Friday afternoon at one of the

largest Canada Employment Centres in Metro Toronto, a city in which 200,000 officially unemployed people reside.

Why did the federal government fly us all the way to Toronto to see a Canada Employment Centre, when we could have seen one at home?

Good question. Perhaps the pastries they served were available only in Toronto. Anyway, we listened to a number of speeches as well as the grumblings of some of the non-government types that had appeared.

"Why in hell are we here?" asked one representative of the local business community.

Just then, the first unexpected event of the conference happened. In waltzed several members of the Toronto Union of Unemployed Workers, who have been protesting cutbacks in counselling services in metro Toronto.

I looked at the bureaucrats. They looked nervous.

A number of us realized that these are the first real people we have run into that afternoon—they are unkempt, unshaven, they look real.

Until then, we were like a bunch of Popes travelling through the Phillipines, or somewhere. Everything was carefully controlled along our route, until they came along.

Soon after, we all went our separate ways, some to the airport, some back to the hotel until they could get a flight home, and some of us to drinking spots, like the Elephant and Crown, for Guinness on tap—on the federal government, of course. (Something they call incidentals. Six dollars a day to spend in any way we wish.)

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