

Opportunities for Youth Program

service to administer the plan. It would not be fair to blame them for the shortcomings of the program. They tried to put together what they could in a short space of time. I think the press has been overly preoccupied with mismanagement in the department or agency responsible for the Opportunities for Youth program and has failed to recognize that the basic mismanagement stems from the minister's own office.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Paproski: Resign.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): The real problem does not stem from the fact that a group of young people are trying to save the minister's bacon. The real problem stems from the fact that the minister seems incompetent to save his own bacon. This debate is important. If, in future, there are to be introduced effective youth programs, the minister's office must be effectively reorganized, especially if we are ever to expect any kind of reasonable or rational approach to the young people of this country, either with regard to summer employment or any other aspect.

Mr. Baldwin: The minister presides over the ministry of chaos.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): When assessing blame for mismanagement and incompetence, we must not stop at the organizers of the Opportunities for Youth program; we must stop at the minister's desk. One of the problems encountered has been that of lack of criteria. I have said much of this before and do not want to repeat myself. It is obvious that the individual whims of project co-ordinators determine whether projects will be accepted. Only when projects are compatible with the personal predilections of project co-ordinators are they accepted. Certainly, nothing has done more to bring disillusionment and frustration to many young people with regard to many worth-while projects which have been submitted by them.

I do not want to talk too long because I know other hon. members wish to participate in the debate. I wish to make a few suggestions which I think ought to be considered if we are ever to introduce adequate programs for Canadian youth in future. Obviously, we must have a clearer picture, both of the problems and possibilities with regard to summer employment.

Mr. Greene: Clearer than those words.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): I think the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources (Mr. Greene) said that we must be clearer. I agree.

Mr. Greene: This is a speech in a fog.

Mr. Baldwin: The minister is not out of the fog.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): The ministry, including the Secretary of State and others, must be clear about these matters. I submit that we need a special parliamentary committee to scrutinize many questions regarding youth in this country. Obviously, we need a thorough and

[Mr. MacDonald (Egmont).]

objective evaluation of the summer Opportunities for Youth program and other programs which this government has initiated. I have not said anything about other badly organized programs that could do with effective parliamentary scrutiny. I think Parliament ought to establish a special committee on youth to look at the whole question of federal programs for youth, summer employment, the criteria and format to be followed with regard to these programs, and so on.

We should also examine the question of the increasing amount of travel engaged in by youth. In my province, we have gone through a most distressing period of hostility having to do with youth hostels. An examination of that question would contribute more to our understanding of youth and could effectively facilitate the movement of young people in this country. I think youth travel is most important, because through travelling young people can gain a better understanding of the different regions of this nation.

There are increasing problems having to do with education and education costs which are related to summer employment and which must be looked at in a broad perspective. We must look at the long term opportunities for youth. We must learn to listen and to consult with responsible groups, agencies and organizations. There must be an opportunity to publicly evaluate these matters, to reflect on them and to propose answers with respect to them. At least, we must make some tentative commitments in areas where young people and adults can reach an understanding. We must do that if we are not again to be the victims of haphazard planning and too little, coming too late. I think it is extremely important for this House to appoint a committee which can be seized of the consideration of such matters as I have alluded to, then in succeeding years the possibilities of imaginative Opportunities for Youth programs can be effectively realized.

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, in my contribution to the debate this afternoon, I have no intention of damning the whole Opportunities for Youth program. Undoubtedly, there have been many fine, original well conceived and useful projects brought forward by students, and many of these will be approved. Some of them have been approved. Undoubtedly, another great number will be ill conceived and wasteful as a result of the haste in which this program was launched. It seems to me, regardless of the validity of any of the projects, that the Opportunities for Youth program is really a hasty stop-gap, a cork hastily shoved in in a vain attempt to plug a torrent of enforced idleness on the part of our young people.

The Opportunities for Youth program, regardless of its good and bad aspects, cannot be separated from the tragedy of the general unemployment in Canada today. I suppose "tragedy" is too weak a word, because "tragedy" often implies some mishap or accident causing concern or sorrow. Yet the millions of idle, restless and resentful people are no accident. It is the direct legacy of a monstrous act of premeditated social vengeance, as a result of which we pension off the kids at 21 and sentence old men