

Unemployment among Youth

conomic stress, but increasing numbers are becoming frustrated, adding to the tension we find, especially, in our larger cities. Unless we take some corrective measures soon, we are going to have more and more violence in the years that lie ahead. Obviously, we must search for more solutions.

• (1510)

There are people in the country who tend to give up, who tend simply to go on welfare because they have been unable to find a job, and there is no other choice for them. They find themselves in a system that encourages them not to find work or to have any motivation for finding work. Then again, we have some of the older people in society who like to criticize our young people for being lazy. They criticize their standards, the fact they let their hair grow long or the fact they challenge the norms of present day society. Something must be wrong with a society in which our young people do this, and which forces them into the situation they are facing. I suggest we have to act and to act soon. If we do not, we will have more and more of our young people saying that any value placed by society on institutions is irrelevant, that society must be changed. Perhaps others will declare that they must resort to violence, and this is what I do not want to happen.

Much of this reaction would be prevented if we had programs that provided work for our young people, which gave them something meaningful to pursue in their lives and in the lives of their families. This is why there are a number of suggestions that I want to make. I am repeating suggestions that have been made by this party, by the Canadian Council on Social Development and various other institutions. In talking about unemployment among young people, you cannot divorce it from general unemployment in this country. The important reason there are so many young people unemployed in Canada today is that there is so much general unemployment. The economy is not operating correctly, and I suggest there is no excuse for this. There is no reason for over half a million Canadians being unemployed. No rhetoric or excuse can justify that.

If we are to solve youth unemployment, we will have to start the economy rolling again, and there are a number of ways of doing this. First, we have to solve the problem of foreign ownership. We need more research and development. Many of our graduates go through university but are then unable to find work. Obviously, this research and development is not going to be done if parent plants are not located in Canada. We will have to locate them in Canada if we want to create more jobs in this country.

If I may turn now to something more specific, I should like to detail some of the things that can be done for our young people. I suggest we put more emphasis on on-the-job training so that our young people, regardless of their educational background, receive training on the job. This is very important. Sometimes people have to be retrained three or even four times during their lifetime, especially in a fast-moving technological society. Some of the regulations have to be much more flexible if people are to qualify for training courses of this kind. On-the-job training is relevant today, and is something that should be emphasized a great deal more than it is.

[Mr. Nystrom.]

Second, if we are to continue the Opportunity for Youth program, opportunities for youth should be directed more to those who really need those opportunities. Perhaps more importantly, Opportunity for Youth programs or similar programs should be brought in for non-students, for the working class or young farmers, or for those young people who want to start up a business, and so on. Only 9 per cent of the jobs provided through OFY go to non-students. If we continue this program, we must have a similar program for those who are not students.

I also think we will have to have more programs for young people starting farming. In my province and across the country I am told that the average age of farmers is about 57. I think this tells us a great deal about rural Canada. We will have to offer more training for our young rural people, with interest free loans and similar financial help, if we are to provide jobs for our young people in rural Canada.

Then, we will have to do more for young married couples. Many of these young couples are in very severe economic straits and need to be helped. My colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. MacInnis) has already mentioned that day care centres should be readily available. We should spend more money on day care centres rather than giving gifts, write-offs and tax concessions to the rich corporations of this country. Day care centres provide our young women with an equal opportunity to go out to work or to pursue what they wish to pursue. In addition, there should be more public housing and a greater availability of loans at low interest rates so our young couples can make a better beginning as they enter their working life.

Then, we must have such programs as early retirement for our older people. I do not see why our older people should not have the chance to retire and to draw benefits from security plans, such as the Canada Pension Plan and the Old Age Security Act at the age of 60. If that were the case, we would open up a whole series of new jobs for our younger people, and it would enable our older people to pursue a more interesting life.

These are some of the things that can be done, so we are making these concrete suggestions today. We will have to do some of these things if we want to find work for a quarter of a million young people who are unemployed today. There is no excuse for this number of unemployed. If we do not do something about it, the situation will snowball; it will worsen and we will then be faced with many more serious social problems. I trust that when the minister speaks he will reply to some of the points that we are going to raise, and will explain to us why the government is not pursuing some of these ideas. Perhaps he will announce new programs that he may have for this quarter of a million young people who are unemployed. They are a very important part of this country and they need jobs as much as anyone else. With that I conclude by once again emphasizing that unemployment is a very serious problem that we cannot overlook, one that will have serious repercussions for the future if we do not act now.

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, first of all may I congratulate my colleague to my left for introducing this motion which is a very succinct one, very much to the point, and perhaps one of the most important