YOUTH AND UNEMPLOYMENT: PLANS AND PROSPECTS

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKING PAPERS

The Faculty of Social Work of the University of Regina developed from a research base and since its beginning in 1971 has adopted a specific stance and emphasis characterized by the term "social administration." This approach promotes a way of thinking about social work and social services which enables policy and practice to be viewed as mutually important. Social administration research involves the description and analysis of the operations of the human services; examination of social change and the ways it affects the conditions and people served by the human services; the study of social policies and practices and their individual and social consequences. In addition to such considerations of what has been and what is, it is concerned with making informed judgments of what ought to be. With the provision of a sustaining grant from Canada's National Health and Welfare in August, 1982, it became possible for the Faculty's Social Administration Research Unit to develop a more coordinated and effective program which ties together collegial research, policy development, advocacy and information dissemination. These objectives are expressed through an Occasional Paper Series as well as through the Working Papers.

Working Papers are designed to remind us of persistent problems and to focus on emerging issues, so as to stimulate debate and identify research priorities. This first Working Paper addresses the issue of unemployment among youth, the sector which is affected first and most dramatically by recession and by structural and technological changes. A few years ago Sam Sieber's book titled Fatal Remedies pointed to the "ironies of social intervention" which have not only unanticipated consequences but worse, also produce harmful effects. In this paper, George Maslany and Graham Riches remind us of intractable problems which could very well not be solved by resort to old answers and may be made intolerable if consequences of new nostrums are not weighed with great care.

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INTRODUCTION

Youth unemployment seems generally to be regarded like the weather, as a phenomenon that everyone discusses but no one can do anything about. On the way to this Conference* we encountered a rather inquisitive immigration officer who asked why we were going to the U.S.A. When informed that we had been invited to lead a workshop dealing with the problems of youth unemployment and what to do about it, his immediate reaction was "everybody knows that nothing can be done about that". Feeling rather uneasily that if we did not agree with him he might find some reason to deny us entry to his country, we simply answered that he was probably correct but we would still take a shot at it. Although he was undoubtedly speaking for himself rather than representing his government's official position on this matter, his point of view probably is characteristic of a wide range of the population, including officials who might otherwise be in a position to effect an impact.

The format of this presentation will be two-fold. The first part will provide information on current Canadian initiatives at the federal and provincial level. The second part will focus on a critical analysis of these initiatives and then raise issues which we deem relevant to future planning. This analysis may move us beyond discussing youth unemployment as a hopeless cause, and elicit reactions, concerns and suggestions from which we might all profit.

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*This paper was originally presented at an Invitational Workshop, "Youth and Work: Demands for New Policy Initiatives", at the International Council on Social Welfare's North American Region 1984 Seminar, held in Dearborn, Michigan, February 12-15, 1984. It is also part of the Proceedings of that Conference.

+We are very much indebted to officials in the newly-created federal Ministry of State of Youth, headed by the Honorable Celine Hervieux-Payette. Numerous relevant articles and briefs were quickly forwarded to us by them. Similar assistance was rendered by our own provincial Ministry of Advanced Education and Manpower.
THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE

The Canadian Government's explanation of our economic difficulty is that it can be likened to a flu that may be producing discomfort now, but from which we are expected to recover soon. The official American view of the economic recession is similar. Moreover, if we extend the analogy, we don't have to search far for a major cause or cure of our ills, since it is common knowledge that whenever the U.S. sneezes, Canada is likely to catch a cold. Thus, if there are signs that the American economy is recovering, this may be taken as a sure sign that our economy's return to better health should not be far behind.

However, the sickness analogy tends to break down at the point of suggesting what the labour market will be like as recovery occurs. The situation is expected to differ from past conditions in two key ways: the demographic composition of the labour force and the types of skills expected to be in demand. Dramatic changes in the age structures of the labour force are expected, associated with the end of the post-war baby-boom. At the same time there is an anticipated 15 per cent reduction of the 15-24 age group in the next 15 years in comparison to the previous 15 year period. Together with these demographics there is the expectation of massive increases in the service sector (commercial, business and personal) as well as demands for highly skilled labour, especially related to advances in microtechnology. In other words, persons not now in the labour force would be unwise simply to be marking time waiting for the economic climate to change. If and when the demands for labour do rise, the climate will have changed qualitatively and their former skills may well be obsolete. The prime culprit for this mismatch will be the "chip". Skills that were good enough to help father and mother support a family in the past will not go far in helping their children do the same in the future.

It is the young who are at greatest risk during this transitional period. Even though there could be an upsurge in the economy, this should not be interpreted as implying any corresponding decline in unemployment, particularly in the youth category. Despite the fact that this category is expected
to decline in proportion to other sectors, high unemployment rates will continue, generally running at a rate twice that of the general work force (currently estimated at 11% vs. 20+%).\textsuperscript{3} No matter which way one looks at it, such a prospect is quite unacceptable and inconsistent with the Canadian Government's ideals.

One of the most prominent of these ideals is the principle of "full employment"\textsuperscript{4} which means, not so much a job for everyone in order to help one achieve one's full potential, but a job to one's liking.\textsuperscript{5} It should be noted, however, that, despite the fact that this objective has formed a central plank in Government economic policies since World War II, this is a goal we have more strayed from than made progress towards. Nevertheless, new initiatives are currently in place and others are forthcoming.

The major incentive by the Federal Government to get at the root of this problem appears to focus on meeting existing and prospective labour demands with a special emphasis on various employment preparation programs. As is currently evident and likely to become more pronounced in the future, prospective employees will have to indicate a great deal more than willingness to work and learn when seeking employment. They will also have to demonstrate ability and experience. The current irony is that at the same time there is large scale unemployment, there are simultaneously shortages in many high skilled areas.\textsuperscript{6} There are many attractive jobs to be had were there only a qualified labour force available to fill them. The government programs are an attempt to re-direct human resources to where they are in demand.

In brief, the government has embarked on a thrust emphasizing training programs relevant to perceived labour demand, as well as job creation initiatives which will complement new directions that industry and commerce are supposed to take - to enable the work force to accommodate to the changing needs of the labour market.

FEDERAL INITIATIVES

One of the prime reasons young people are deemed at risk in a tight labour market is that they lack work-related skills and experience which
government programs are oriented to help them overcome. Roughly 60% of the budgetary allocation of the Employment and Immigration Ministry ($1.06 billion, 1983-84 fiscal year) is going to be devoted to such employment preparation measures for young people. The remaining 40% will be directed to job creation strategies.

These policies have been further articulated as follows:

1. to ensure relevant training to create skills necessary to growth
2. to ensure access of all Canadians to jobs
3. to assist those displaced by industrial or technical change
4. to assist communities with declining or non-existent economic bases
5. to facilitate cooperation among labour, business and governments to achieve high levels of employment

The above policy principles have been further amplified to include:

1. **Skill Creation**: This entails an emphasis on the creation of labour market relevant training programs which are largely vocational training. Included here is not only the facilitation of an educational infra-structure but also the provision of counselling opportunities to enable a prospective work force to make informed choices on promising options such as anticipated future demand.

2. **Access to Jobs**: Many prospective labour force entrants never get a chance because of barriers, some of which are of their own making, others of which are not. This will entail providing work experience to those lacking it; basic education for those lacking prerequisites for specialized training. In other cases there will be a new emphasis on Affirmative Action programs especially those supporting women, natives and the handicapped.

3. **Adjustment Assistance**: This will be provided to workers in unproductive industries as assistance in retraining.

4. **Local Employment Development**: This is intended as more of an emphasis on long-term strategy for industries to expand and modernize especially in rural areas.
Most importantly, the government would require that these become cooperative efforts. It is prepared to infuse sizeable funds, but not to carry the burden alone.

The following is a selected listing of programs offered by the Employment and Immigration Ministry in its effort to address the foregoing policy principles:

1. Career Selection

Previously, decisions about career paths were determined largely by uninformed individual choices, although, in select cases, some assistance was provided by local school counselling services. Provisions for counselling in order to enhance career choice decision-making will now be given increased attention by this Department through the Canada Employment Centers (CECs). The budget for these employment services has currently been set at $145 million and they are expected to reach about 2.2 million persons a year.

In some cases, it will entail making publications such as Careers Canada and Careers Provincial available to person wanting to know more about some seven hundred occupations listed. A similar function is served by Choices, an interactive computer system, which attempts to fit a job seeker's interests, training and skills to job opportunities. Also meant to assist in job-finding is a program known as Creative Job Search Techniques, which consists of group seminars that suggest ways of getting jobs.

One of the most futuristic approaches is the Canadian Occupational Projection System (COPS). This is akin to a Dow-Jones index of occupational prospects in various areas that is not unlike a futures market. COPS suggests where the pay-offs are likely to be, so that individuals can make informed judgments about present educational-vocational investments. It is intended that the System will inform users about how many are entering various fields, what skills will be in demand and where the jobs will be located. All together, the above are expected to help individuals get better information so that they can more easily answer the important question, "Whatever will I do?".
2. Training for Employment

A wide range of programs are classified as training-oriented to help people get jobs and keep them. The amount allocated for them is close to $480 million, although the anticipated take-up by approximately 138,000 will be much less than in the Career Selection programs. These training-oriented programs cost more and reach fewer, because they are more extensive and intensive time-wise. The following programs are included in this category:

(a) **National Training Program** - This may cover tuition and, in some cases, allowances for skills development.

(b) **Job Readiness Training** - This is more elementary than the above, with an emphasis on teaching work skills and how to locate a job.

(c) **Work Adjustment Training** - Much like the above, this is focused on developing career goals and creating attitudes and habits which will help one to get and keep a job.

(d) **Institutional Training** - This would encompass not only classroom training but would also link it to practical work experience.

(e) **Occupational Orientation Courses** - These are intended to offer practical on-the-job experience in various trades.

(f) **Basic Training for Skill Development** - Some interested persons may be denied admission to study because they have an educational deficiency and are unable to meet basic entry requirements. This program is intended to help such people boost these deficiencies in order to overcome such barriers.

(g) **Critical Trade Skills Training** - The focus here is to help to fill shortages in high skilled areas such as tool and die makers and aircraft instrumentation.

(h) **National and General Industrial Training** - These are two separate programs geared for retraining workers whose skills may have become obsolete.

3. Work Experience

A key feature relating to employability often has to do with individuals gaining relevant experience prior to being given consideration for employment. In recognition of this relationship certain programs have been established. The 1983-84 budget is $438.5 million, and the programs are expected to reach 163,000 individuals. Programs included here are:

(a) **Job Corps** - These consist of projects to aid prospective employees in making that first step towards entry into the employment market - by having had a job.
(b) **Careers Access** - This also tries to help persons who have been unsuccessful in finding a job for at least five months.

(c) **Canada Works Program** - In communities facing high unemployment, this will result in the creation of jobs which can last from six to fifty-two weeks.

There are a variety of other programs, such as **Outreach** (for those needing special help such as natives and youth in high unemployment areas); **Specialized Youth Units** (which run job-finding clubs and help interested persons learn how to find a job); and finally other **Special Programs** for groups chronically unemployed such as natives, women and those with disabilities.

A wide range of programs have been cited, but it should be noted that the eligibility for and distinctions between them are often difficult to discern and beyond the scope of this broad introduction. More specifics about any of these programs can be obtained from sources cited in the bibliography as well as from the Department responsible for producing the documents on which these descriptions are based.

**PROVINCIAL INITIATIVES**

The provincial role, in addressing youth unemployment (in the case of the government of Saskatchewan), seems to emphasize training rather than economic initiatives such as job creation.\(^{11}\) This may partly be because education is clearly within the provincial jurisdiction, whereas the latter falls more into the federal mandate. To date, provincial job creation programs for youth have been primarily of short duration (seasonal) and usually in the form of a subsidy to an employer. The Departments of Agriculture, Culture and Recreation, and Industry and Commerce last year jointly conducted a program which paid an employer up to $380./month per student,\(^{12}\) for summer jobs of a maximum three months duration in the small business, farm, non-profit and government sectors.

The lion's share of the financial resource allocation will be spent on expanding Saskatchewan's vocational technical training capacity by 66% in the next two years with the following objectives:\(^{13}\)
(1) To increase skill training capacity to meet the projected demand for skilled manpower.

(2) To expand the range of programs in the high technology and service areas.

(3) To accommodate a wider spectrum of students who are currently under-represented in the vocational stream such as natives, women, the handicapped and those with less than senior matri-culation standing.\(\text{14}\)

(4) To open up educational opportunities outside of the current concentrations in urban areas.

(5) To emphasize the development of greater flexibility and responsiveness to emerging training needs of the labour market.

What is of notable interest in the provincial documents reviewed is the absence of any reference to the university sector as a potential resource to be used to meet these objectives. It seems quite evident that government is not including universities in its game plan, even though the university structure can and does address the same objectives. Further confirmation of this ignoring of the potential role of the universities is reflected in funding. A massive infusion of funds is planned for the technical vocational training sector, but the universities in this province, despite massive increases in enrolment, have actually experienced a decline in government grants.\(\text{15}\) It seems that the government position is that the universities are saturated, and maybe even have too much. In need of additional support are the vocational-technology institutions.

PHILOSOPHY UNDERLYING EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

The current theoretical thrust of the federal-provincial intitiatives seems to be a sort of synthesis of Roosevelt's \textbf{New Deal} programs of the '30s and a continuation of the Johnson era \textbf{War on Poverty} programs of the '60s. It is, however, quite crucial to distinguish between these rather contrasting orientations towards how to deal with large scale unemployment. The assumption underlying the New Deal was that there was something wrong with the economy. There were no jobs, so the government provided the funds to create them through various public works projects. Simply put, the programs succeeded if they provided jobs.
In contrast, interventions relating to the social programs of the '60s were based on the philosophical principle that:

The economic system was functioning more or less well. The problem was within the disadvantaged groups. The social action programs were designed to bring about changes in individuals and in institutions which would lead eventually to the disappearance of the problems of disadvantage.\textsuperscript{16}

Put another way, it might be said that the solutions of the '30s were characterized by blaming the (economic) system, while those of the later period blamed the victim. The more recent view is that people are unemployed because they are square pegs which do not fit into the round holds of demand: this entails a bit of squaring of the holes, but predominantly the pegs have to be rounded, molded and refined to fit properly in place.

As has been mentioned, the current approach appears to adopt the solutions of both eras, but represents more of a carry-over of the '60s than a revisiting of the Keynesian policies of the '30s. The present predominant emphasis, as reflected by funding allocations, is on employment preparation programs, but there are also emphases on reducing barriers to entry to the labour market and on creating more jobs. Nevertheless, as it stands, the unemployed are going to have to be prepared to accommodate themselves to the demands of the labour market, rather than unrealistically expecting the market to accommodate to them.

PRAISEWORTHY CAMPAIGN PROMISES

The concern about unemployment, particularly as it affects youth, is fairly universal. The diagnosis is quite clear cut. The planning to improve the situation appears impressive. The amounts allocated are staggering. We were also struck by the consistency among the various reports of government departments and task forces at our disposal. As a rule, they tended to possess high commonality with one another or else were complimentary. It is as if they were all orchestrated by a master conductor as the pieces fit together so well. Rarely, if ever, are any
contradictory notes evident. Experts, officials and others all seem to be in general agreement about what is wrong and what needs to be done about it. The catch is that consistency should not be seen as accuracy. High agreement that the recession is no more than a temporary downslide or that government policies as outlined will help target groups resolve their predicaments may well represent mere wishful thinking rather than fact.

We should not lose sight of the impact these programs will have in both the short and long-term on labour force participation rates; nor do we know if they will effectively reverse the high unemployment rates of the young. Will these policies and programs actually result in more young people getting jobs and, then keeping them? Not only time but also careful monitoring will tell whether government projections come true, whether interventions and prognostications of their impact meet their mark. On the government side, both levels are singing in fair unison, "We will overcome". Our own response is, "Will we?"

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF POLICY INITIATIVE

This second section will address some of the popular assumptions underlying current unemployment intervention strategies and alternative courses of action which might be suggested should they prove to be incorrect.

CLARIFICATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Youth is much easier to define than unemployment. The latter term unemployment is heard quite frequently, but it often has quite different meanings. This section will outline some of these distinctions.

Perhaps the most conservative definition is that implied by the Unemployment Insurance Commission which reflects the number of individuals who collect benefits, after they have met a complex set of eligibility criteria, the precise details of which need not concern us here. These benefits currently can last up to fifty weeks and they cover 60% of insurable earnings
up to $425/week.* The most crucial feature, however, is that one must have worked for a given period of time before one can qualify, and these benefits run out, at best, in less than a year. Clearly, the numbers and proportions calculated here reflect only a very select component of the potential labour force.

A much more precise indicator of the numbers of those without work and seeking employment is found in the monthly Statistics Canada Survey. This is the indicator commonly reported as reflecting unemployment rates, nationwide currently estimated to be at about 11%.

In Saskatchewan, a province of roughly one million persons, this survey is based on a mid-monthly sample of six thousand families (roughly 6%), one thousand of whom are rotated in and out every month (each family being contacted on a maximum of six successive occasions). This survey attempts to collect information on those loosely defined as "actively seeking work" in the previous four week period or anticipating being employed within four weeks.

The fine print of the Stats Canada definition reveals some interesting features, not so much in terms of who are included but rather in terms of who are excluded from its calculation. Not surprisingly, the institutionalized in hospitals or correctional facilities are not counted. The more interesting feature is that natives living on reserves are excluded. Reports of unemployment amongst natives suggests that their unemployment rates are often equal to the employment rates of the general population—in other words, running in excess of 90% on some reserves.18

Another group not included in the Stats Canada Survey are those referred to as the "invisibly" unemployed. As of the January 1984 survey period, there were 1,473,000 unemployed in Canada of whom 546,000 were in the fifteen to twenty-four age range.19 This suggests that this

*These details were obtained as a result of a telephone inquiry to the local office charged with the responsibility of administering these benefits. Benefits and criteria are periodically revised and vary from region to region. The specific regulations should be available from this Commission upon request.
age range is bearing a disproportionate burden of the unemployment rate. In the late '70s, it was even as high as 52%. These data suggest that, although jobs are still the key to success, and thus are really the only game in town, a certain segment will probably no longer try to participate in the lottery because they view the odds as too badly stacked against them. There is little question that these data probably represent only the visible component of a broader group who have simply given up trying to find a job. Other than reflecting on the potential resources of this group that are not being utilized, we should keep in mind the fact that this "invisible" group could become visible, if opportunities for others were to be enhanced by large scale employment facilitating programs (i.e., job preparation and creation). In other words, it is not at all inconceivable that, although these programs appear to be doing a good job and increasing the number of employed youths, there might still be only a limited perceptible reduction in the youth unemployment rates. Attempts to achieve any semblance of full employment of this population of potentially employable young people might prove to be as fruitless as trying to sweep up a dirt floor - the dust bin fills up, but still one never seems to get anywhere.

Another factor aggregate statistics fail to reveal is that, even though the youth category may be bearing most of the burden of unemployment, there are sub-groups of youth who carry a disproportionate disadvantage in this regard. Consider racial minorities, especially natives, or the handicapped. Special programs have been created to focus on these youth; however, we suspect that, even with this type of assistance, those possessing more than one of the above characteristics have a progressively decreased probability of securing any semblance of long-term employment. We suspect, for example, that a young native woman school drop-out who is either mentally or physically handicapped would have a better chance of winning a national lottery than she would of securing and retaining a full-time job. We would be interested to examine Statistics Canada's data on these sub-groups to determine whether our suspicions are well-founded.
ECONOMIC RECOVERY: FACT OR FICTION?

Some of the assumptions about the future could very well be wrong and with disastrous consequences. It is of interest for example, to note how a supposedly objective science such as economics is replete with so many value-loaded terms. The consensus among economists seems to be that our current recession is a type of sickness and that the natural (or more accurately, wishful) state of the economy is one of recovery and growth, which in turn will lead naturally to lower unemployment.

What if the recovery fails to materialize? What if the situation gets worse before it gets any better? What if the jobs for which we are preparing a workforce simply fail to materialize, such as the anticipated demand for forty thousand programmers by 1990? What if the emphasis on high technology, for example, winds up being self-cannibalizing? In other words, what if high technology diverts the work force away from low skill labour intensive areas and then turns to begin to feed off its own? What if the technological advances in robotics, the forthcoming generation of computers and the like come to serve as types of Frankensteins that devour even those who initially nurtured them? In the end, there might not be a need for any kind of labour force, or at least not for one of the kind we can currently foresee or prepare people for.

Economic recovery may come, or it might not. Even if it does, the displacement of the labour force that will occur with a high tech thrust may not leave large segments of the population in a position that permits them to reap the benefits of such progress. For many, the issue of economic recovery may well be a moot point as they sit idly by. Unless government becomes an employer of last resort, political posturing about full employment ideals may prove ultimately incompatible with policies which foster the creation of high-tech jobs which, in turn, simply displace others by technological advances.
IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF YOUTH

It is often taken for granted that experts know what is best for others. Frankly, few of our readers are unemployed youth; few, if any, of us are unemployed and most of us are not likely to be classified as youth. We fear that, despite our best intentions, without input or feedback from a representative cross section of unemployed youth, the plans we conceive may not be as well received as we would wish. G.B. Shaw put it quite nicely when he said, "don't do unto others as you would have them do unto you, they may have different tastes". Paternalism may be self-defeating.

In this light, we are impressed by the approach being advocated by the Honorable Madame Celine Hervieux-Payette, Minister of the newly-created Ministry of State of Youth. She has identified as an integral component of her Department's policy formulation process, meetings with youth in various parts of the country to give them the opportunity to air their concerns and suggest solutions. We would caution that such approaches require considerable open-mindedness and active listening, lest the only ideas acknowledged and affirmed are those which have been decided on in the first place.

FALLIBILITY OF PREDICTIONS AND PROJECTIONS

Although the universe is undoubtedly unfolding as it should, events often don't turn out as we expect or hope. Rarely do those constructing models to project future situations report uncertainties. Rarely do they indicate how error tends to increase with time and how much it depends on the nature of the variables being used in any forecast. Graphical representations usually consist of fine lines joining data points on a past-future continuum (irregularities often smoothed out in order to enhance esthetic charm), but it would be more realistic if future trends were plotted so as to reflect this uncertainty. For events in the immediate future, the line on the graph might still be fairly narrow, reflecting a narrow range of possibilities; however, as the time frame becomes more extended, the graphical line should correspondingly broaden and, in many cases, not unreasonably, be plotted with a broom. In some cases, despite explicit forecasts, anyone's guess is probably as good as anyone else's. Those forecasting economic climates could learn a
lesson from meteorologists — the longer term the forecast is, the more likely it is to run astray. Weathermen have learned to beware and so should economists.

A further extension of this point is that many predictive models appear to be a case of driving down the road by looking through the rearview mirror, estimating what's coming up ahead on the basis of the road that has been left behind. If what lies ahead is indeed a lawful extension of what has been passed by, one is on the right track. On the other hand, if it isn't, with catastrophes and other unaccounted factors coming into play, one could wind up in the ditch. Much the same often occurs with military strategists who always seem to focus their plans on how to have won the last war rather than on how to proceed with dealing with a prospective one.

The principle being stated here, notwithstanding impressive calculations of what will be in store for us in terms of the future course of our economy, is that we should not feel constrained by scenarios currently espoused. We should keep our options open and even prepare contingencies for the unimaginable. The best preparation for the future may be to lay out more options today, ranging from the plausible all the way through to the outrageous.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

The only information reviewed at present about the effect of programs in place describes budgets allocated and anticipated take-up. This data reflects more process than impact. In the same way that the number of people attending church does not prove the existence of a God, the large number enrolled in either employment preparation or job creation schemes should not be interpreted as proof of success for these programs in enabling persons to achieve on-going employment. Follow-up and longitudinal studies will be necessary to answer questions concerning the respective merits of the wide variety of programs available. No mention of any type of evaluation of this nature has been found, nor was there any reference to
what proportion of funding will be assigned to serve this function. Does this mean that any monitoring of programs will at best be inconsistent or hit and miss or simply non-existent?

We would urge that some agency independent of government, having a role akin to that of the auditor-general's office, be charged with the responsibility of ensuring that campaign promises are not diverted or perverted, as has recently been alleged, by partisan considerations. The credibility, if not the ultimate success of these programs, could well be impaired if they are deemed to be no more than an euphemism for "the old pork barrel".

Diligent program management will also be required at another level to ensure that there is a match between the campaign promises and the actual practices of applicants. In view of the massive sums of money that are being allocated, we expect that these sums will attract a wide spectrum of interested parties ranging from the reputable and legitimate all the way through to the carpet-baggers looking for an easy dollar. It may prove difficult to make the distinction until after a great deal of money has been spent on job creation projects that didn't work. Exploitation of this nature is probably unavoidable, but careful project monitoring and management might well serve to minimize it.

EDUCATION FOR UNCERTAINTY

If the situation in the labour market of tomorrow is going to be so different from what it is today, what will be the role of our educational institutions in helping us to adapt to these demands? Can we presume that the principles of universal education will not be abandoned? How will we be preparing our young population to fulfill their potential, especially with respect to being able to prepare people for entry into any conceivable form of labour force?

What do educational institutions attempt to prepare people for, if there are few jobs to be had? Moreover, what preparation is there for positions which are changing so rapidly that education for them is exceeded by their half-life (defined as the number of years it takes for whatever one has learned during educational preparation to become obsolete)? For example, especially
in fields such as those concerned with computer technology, half of what was covered in a course of studies could be useless by the time one has graduated. Accordingly, provision for life-long learning would seem to be, not a luxury, but a necessity, not only to ensure that students keep up with the evolution of their field, but also to ensure that the educational resources remain relevant by keeping in touch with latest developments. We wish to emphasize that, as important as it is for students to keep abreast of developments, the same principle applies to educational institutions. Those that don't keep up simply become irrelevant.

These observations may apply most closely to professional or vocational technical types of programs but less so to much of the front-end loading part of general educational preparation which, in itself, is not directly career-oriented. That part of our educational system has come to be better characterized more by its unchanging nature than by its flexibility. It has been said that the primary-secondary school system hasn't changed substantially for a very long time and that it is still largely oriented to preparing someone to become an eighteenth-century British clerk. Furthermore, many of the subjects taught, from primary through post-secondary, are regarded as having questionable relevance to anything else, often leaving school leavers ill prepared for real life: job readiness to life skills. As of late, this educational system has received substantial criticism, some of which it may deserve because, among other factors, it has a monopolistic control and there is therefore little incentive for it to have to adapt to any changing circumstances in economic and social conditions. Part of this problem can also be attributed to the lack of clarity or articulation of the goals of basic education which has led some, like Illich, to suggest that the prime goal of this educational system is to employ teachers.²³

We would like to propose the seemingly preposterous suggestion that an educational system which may only seem to be tangential to the needs of the labour market, may well prove, in the long run, to be the best preparation for it. If these programs actually achieve what they often stress they seek to foster, namely an appreciation of learning or learning how to
learn rather than an emphasis on specific skills, inducing participation in these programs could turn out to be one of our best investments. We speculate that these types of generic education (to distinguish them from training) could offer the greatest versatility to changing employment opportunities, if not the future in general. It would not surprise us if, with the advent of computers having artificial intelligence, philosophy or psychology graduates wind up being in greater demand than those studying programming today. The same could hold true for other fields currently subsumed under the rubric of liberal arts education.

The best educational system may well be not the one that's like the kitten energetically chasing around the ball of yarn wherever it may go, but the one like the wise old cat which strategically positions itself so as to cut off the fluff no matter where it may roll. In these changing times, we expect that it will be the generically trained who inherit the world of the future. Expressed otherwise, our short-term educational solutions, particularly those emphasizing vocational technical training, could provide long-term headaches.

Apart from education to meet the needs of versatility in a dynamically changing and largely unpredictable world, there may be options other than work and leisure, one of which has been described as the holding tank approach to foster incentives for students (both young and old) to remain in schools. We expect that, rather than remaining as an interim solution to temporarily keep people out of the labour force, the pursuit of education may become an end in itself, a legitimate occupational category. The ultimate goal of this approach may range all the way from education for good citizenship to a recognition of the inherent value of increased knowledge in whatever area is being focused on. The point here is that planning for the perpetual student may be a feasible alternative to that of trying to keep a segment of the population meaningfully occupied when no formal occupational avenues are available. This could be provided through universal grants, state supported folk schools and community service programs, as is currently the case in some European countries, where students tend to remain in the educational system much longer than here. One could make a similar case for
activities not currently attributed much esteem, such as housework or raising a family (not that we are advocating only women would necessarily fill that role).

We must begin to prepare our youth for what they have in store for them in the future. In our opinion, it would be dangerous to perpetuate the myth of full employment as it has been extolled in the past. Getting a steady job in the future may be more like getting on some Olympic team, a lot more good people apply than actually make it. It would be a great waste of human resources if it ever came to that, since there certainly is no scarcity of things to be done.

Unrealistic as these options may sound, they are not really so out of line when one considers that only a few years ago, the only viable alternative to having income from a job was Army, Navy, Airforce, or in the case of the U.S., the Marines. It used to be that if one couldn't contribute to society by getting a job, one could choose the Military or welfare. Government job creation is broadening this narrow former range of possibilities.

Katimavik is one such initiative that corresponds to this line of thinking. It's a type of domestic peace corps, with those engaged in this program in it more for the love of it than for the subsistence allowance it affords. The parallels between it and a predecessor, the Company of Young Canadians (CYC), are quite pronounced but considering the large-scale controversy the former engendered, those responsible for Katimavik would probably argue that any similarities are purely coincidental. Our only regret is that this type of program is not available for a longer time frame, for some, indefinitely, and that it does not offer greater financial rewards and incentives. Katimavik could well be our window of the world of the future. It could be the way in which fuller employment becomes more than an unattainable dream. Programs such as this are also useful in that they enable worthwhile projects to be completed that would otherwise remain undone. We in Canada should never regard ourselves as having any shortage of matters that need attention - matters with which our most precious natural resource, our youth, could become involved.
We face two ironies. The least is the high unfulfilled demand in skill areas that seems to go hand in hand with high unemployment. The greatest irony, though, is that there are a large number of relevant low skill things that could be done for the enhancement of our lives and environment, and they go hand in hand with massive numbers of persons available to do them but not employed to such ends.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we would like to point to certain assumptions which run through current planning in this field and to underline certain principles which our analysis suggests would better inform the relationship between education and the preparation of young people for the world of work.

What our studies have shown is that current educational endeavours and work readiness programs are in the main characterized by short-term planning; technical and specialist training; professional and paternalistic decision-making which excludes young people; questionable assumptions about the beneficial impact of economic recovery; individualized programming and a common assumption which stresses work only as productive (i.e. commodity producing) labour. Such assumptions we maintain are no longer sufficient to guarantee employment; nor can they respond adequately to the needs of a society in which realizing the work ethic, as traditionally defined, is becoming increasingly out of reach for large segments of the population. As a result we would argue that this traditional concept of employment is also insufficient as a key organizing concept.

In order to prepare current and future generations of young Canadians for a world in which traditional patterns of employment will increasingly become less common and to recognize and encourage the shift towards seeing education as being a lifelong preparation to engage and participate fully in society we would suggest a number of principles. Education should stress generalist studies aimed at preparing young people to be adaptive, versatile, creative and socially responsible; young people themselves should be involved in the planning for their future. Options should be kept open and education should be as self-directed as possible. Emphasis should be as much upon how
to learn as upon the specifics. Service ideals and related work should be stressed as much as commodity producing activity. Job creation activities should be built upon long-term demands which are objectively identifiable. The preparation role of formal education should not simply be for work but also for leisure and socially satisfying relationships: in short for participation in society in its broadest possible sense.

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