

Student Employment

be involved if high school students were also taken into consideration.

Employment of young people between 20 and 24 years of age increased by 53,000 during the months of May and June. This is very good. But when we set alongside that figure the fact that there are 252,000 university students in Canada, the majority of whom are looking for employment, it is evident we are still just scratching the surface of the tremendous need, whether it be government or industry that should assume the responsibility of providing summer employment to our student population.

I bring these points to the attention of the minister because I believe there is an even greater need than we realize from this report to continue in an accelerated way to do even more to provide summer employment for our young people, particularly those who are involved in their educational process and need summer employment to help them to remain in school. I want again to express appreciation to the minister for all that he and the department are doing. I trust they will continue their effort not only through the reports to which he referred in preparation for next year but also by a greater concentration of effort this year, along with a greater degree of participation by the private sector as well.

Mr. David Lewis (York South): Mr. Speaker, I want to keep in mind your directive that we should not be too long at this stage.

I am sorry I cannot join the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thompson) in congratulating the minister on anything he has stated to the house in his report. The statistics he gave are, in my view, extremely misleading. To make a sample study of Ottawa students is about as irrelevant to the situation across Canada as can be imagined. With the government and its various agencies in Ottawa, obviously students looking for work in this city are in the preferred place in Canada. This is an example of the kind of ill thought-out way in which this problem has been pursued by the minister and his department. They think they can satisfy parliament and the people by taking a sample of student employment in the one place where student employment is necessarily much easier to obtain. This is clearly misleading as to the true picture across Canada.

While some of the things undertaken by the department are obviously useful, as I have said on other occasions I am at a loss to know why these things take so long to implement.

It did not take a genius to know last winter that the problem of summer employment would be very serious this summer. It did not require a genius to know, in light of the policies pursued in a deliberate attempt to slow down the economy, there would be a general increase in unemployment and therefore more difficulties for students in the summer. Yet it was months before the minister could be persuaded to institute the inadequate program he has outlined today.

• (2:20 p.m.)

Therefore I cannot congratulate him or his department, although I am sure the officials are doing their best.

I also want to say I am getting thoroughly fed up with the attitude of ministers whenever any problem arises of emphasizing the fact that it is not their sole responsibility. We know that. No one in this house is unaware of the fact that there are things that have to be done by all parts of our society, both governmental and non-governmental. But the fact is that the Department of Manpower and Immigration is the only department of the federal government and the only over-all department of any government in Canada with the machinery to tackle the kind of problem that unemployment presents. It is nonsense to say, "It is not our sole responsibility". I wish ministers would stop singing this song as if it were a broken record. We know this government cannot do everything, but we also know that the responsibilities which are responsibilities of this government must be lived up to. The government cannot excuse itself by pointing out that other people have to do something as well.

I can only express the hope that the minister and the department will make a genuine, effective and nation-wide study of this problem so that if the government continues its policy of increasing unemployment generally the students will not be hurt even more than others. Even though students ought not to get any special consideration, surely we are dealing with a generation in this country which obviously represents our future technological and scientific progress and future leadership. Therefore the students at university and high school levels obviously need our attention, and in my opinion the government has failed to give them the kind of attention they deserve. I only hope that as a result of the department's studies somebody will wake up in the future a little earlier than the eleventh hour.