

*Business of Supply*

● (9:00 p.m.)

The minister referred to the support given by the federal government to post secondary education. He spoke of the Canada student loan plan and of other similar programs. It is obvious from the way he spoke that he recognizes the problem, but recognizing it is just not enough. I agree with the minister that there have been many platitudinous remarks made without any evidence that the problem has been dealt with. We have had enough talk. A good example of that is the minister's remarks regarding the size of the student loan project. I agree that the Canada student loan plan has been a worthwhile project and has proved its worth. But what have student loans to do with student employment? What students in ever increasing numbers require is a summer work opportunity for those who are continuing their education, and for those who have completed it the opportunity to find gainful employment where they can use the skills and the training which has been provided for them. Yes, 300 students are to be absorbed in the Department of Manpower and Immigration for summer work. That is good, but how many jobs are going to be found for students across the nation? As the minister indicated, 367,000 young people will be looking for jobs this summer. His description of his department's plan sounds good, but if the record of the department in regard to manpower in general is any example of its ability to deal with this problem, there is not much hope. I say that words are not enough, neither is concern by itself. There must be action and there must be relevant planning. This is what the government faces so far as its responsibility in concerned simply because it is the government.

The very point made this afternoon by the Leader of the Opposition, and ignored by the minister, was that we in this country are turning out a record number of graduates from all kinds of post secondary educational institutions, and that we have no use for thousands of them in this country. This is a disgrace and this is the key problem that faces us. Presumably, the federal government will go on giving support to post secondary education by means of student loan programs and other plans, and year after year enrolments will increase as well as the size of the graduating classes. But where is the opportunity for careers for these young people? This is not just something to be theoretically projected into the future; it is now upon us. This is why the question that is posed today

in this motion is of the utmost importance to the house.

With this year's graduating class 20 per cent higher than last year's and the number of jobs available this year perhaps 20 per cent fewer than last year, this is becoming a crisis situation which requires the priority attention of the national government. Twice this afternoon the minister emphasized the point that education was a provincial responsibility. I hope the minister is not attempting to convey the impression that the federal government does not have primary responsibility for the development of policies which will provide career opportunities for young Canadians leaving our colleges and universities, while at the same time it faces the responsibility of making sure that our economy is expanding in such a way that opportunities are made available to students who must work to pay part of the cost of their education.

I quite agree that with regard to summer employment the provinces have a role to play. This role should be shared by local governments as well. The minister made the point but I think the house is entitled to know whether the minister has made any effort to meet representatives of the provinces to discuss the problems of summer employment for students. After all, the minister has admitted that the problem was serious last summer and is likely to be worse this summer. I presume he has known that this would be the case. Under these circumstances, not to have initiated a meeting with the provinces to discuss this very serious problem indicates a regrettable apathy and lethargy on the part of the minister.

Even at this late date there are considerations which should be discussed between the federal government and the provinces, late as it may be. Under the present circumstances, with the prospect of scores of thousands of students being unable to find summer jobs, urgent consideration may have to be given to strengthening the present programs of student aid. This may be the only alternative to ending the educational careers of a large number of our young people who are hoping to complete their university education. The danger is even more serious by reason of the fact that this is the second year in a row that there has been a serious shortage of summer jobs for students. We, in the opposition, would like to know whether the minister has had any discussions whatever with the provinces about whether it would be necessary to