

Supply

It is not enough for the minister to stand up and talk about Bill C-114, Bill C-115 or training programs in the future. He knows he will have our support on these measures. What is important is that he take steps to face this economic dilemma that confronts 200,000 students now.

I do not pretend that the government can turn the economy around overnight. I know that is not going to happen. However, I am not sure that all the steps that can possibly be taken to avert this summer's catastrophe have been taken.

Let us not underestimate the problems that are facing students, problems which have been aggravated by recent moves of the federal government. It is this government which has cut \$1.9 billion from post-secondary education funding for the next two years. It has cut that out. The immediate impact of that move by the federal government is that tuition fees for students will go up dramatically next year.

The immediate need that students have this summer is finding a job which enables them to earn more, not less, money than they usually earn in the summer months in order that they can meet the increased costs that will face them when they return to university next autumn. They are counting on these summer jobs to provide them with these additional moneys. They are finding that those jobs simply are not there.

It is a reality that students cannot get through university solely by relying on government grants or loans to see them through their education. These loans and grants have to be supplemented by private income, by the funds that students earn when out working during the summer months. But if there is no opportunity for them to earn, then the adverse impact of that situation falls heaviest on those students who come from families of low or middle income, because those students cannot fall back on parental assistance to pay their way through the next school year. Their parents are in no position, given today's economic situation, to do more than look after the daily demands on the family budget. So these young people face not only the bleak prospect of a summer without a job but, even worse, they face the prospect of having to drop out of school, not because of lack of ability but because of lack of funds. That will scar each young person individually, Mr. Speaker, but it will leave lasting scars on Canada's ability to produce the trained manpower and womanpower that we are going to need in the years ahead. In the meantime, what do you say to these young people, to these thousands of young people who are literally bewildered by the turn of events and who desperately want to find work? How do you explain to them that the climate for job creation does not exist in Canada today? Because they will come right back and tell you that it is your responsibility to create that climate.

● (2040)

The reality of that faces me every day in my own riding of Kingston and the Islands, a riding which has such noted institutions as Queen's University, the Royal Military College and St. Lawrence College. In my riding there are some 2,000 students who cannot find work this summer, who are desperately hoping to find a job. They know that the normal factories

and plants are not providing jobs the way they did last year. They know that they cannot go out and work in the local parks and local grocery stores the way they did last year.

I agree with the minister's comments earlier today that it is the responsibility of all of us to try to help the private sector, to persuade the private sector to hire more students. But the reality is that the private sector has been so brutalized by many of this government's policies, that many sectors of it can no longer stagger along in the way they normally do. They simply cannot expand to take care of an additional 200,000 students this summer, the summer students who are now jobless. At least, they cannot do so without further assistance.

Ten of the minister's colleagues recognized that situation earlier this year, when they wrote to the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) as follows, and this is what they said in their letter:

Unfortunately, young people are hit harder by the ravages of unemployment than is any other group in society. We believe that the logical solution to this urgent problem, which demands immediate attention, is to help private enterprise to hire young people. We propose a program of grants to encourage businesses to create jobs for those under 25 years of age.

They urged the Prime Minister to adopt these measures as soon as possible. But, Mr. Speaker, the federal government has not responded to that letter from the ten Liberal members, any more than it has responded to similar suggestions from members of the opposition parties.

The Minister of Employment and Immigration will know that several provincial governments—in particular, the government of Quebec, Alberta and Manitoba—have indicated their intention to take special action to help unemployed students this year. In the province of Quebec the government has recently announced a program to pay bonuses to employers for hiring students.

Mr. Axworthy: They have cancelled it.

Miss MacDonald: The minister says they have cancelled that program. If they have, I am sorry that the Quebec government has seen fit to do that, because it might have taken up some of the slack that exists today in the province of Quebec, as it exists in other provinces, among the students.

I would like to suggest to the minister—and I made this suggestion to him the other day—that there are programs which can be initiated jointly by the federal and provincial governments, working together, even at this late date, emergency programs, crash programs, which could be introduced. I plead with the minister to consider the suggestion that I made to him, on the basis of the emergency that exists, to call together his provincial counterparts. That could be done next week. It might even be possible to arrange it this week. The 11 ministers could sit down together to try to work out programs which would assist private enterprise to hire the students, so that they can be put into the labour force this summer. It is going to take a joint effort, I realize that. I know that it is not going to be easy. But the co-operation that was spoken of earlier today by my colleague from Rosedale (Mr. Crombie) was never more necessary than it is at the present time.