

Inquiries of the Ministry

appreciate the concern of the right hon. gentleman and his interest in bringing this matter to the attention of the House again. We have launched a summer employment program for students, and these students are just coming on to the labour market in large numbers. The federal government has undertaken to employ about 11,500 students for this summer. That is about 5 or 6 per cent of the federal government total labour force.

At the same time, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, through its "Operation Placement" is attempting to encourage all employers throughout Canada to employ students to the extent of 5 per cent of their labour forces. So if the target of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the provincial governments and the federal government is reached, it will be a reasonably successful season.

At the moment, I think the most urgent matter is to encourage employers throughout Canada to respond to the appeal of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce to take on summer students for temporary employment. There is no doubt that the situation will be tougher this summer than it was last year, when we succeeded in taking on about 90 per cent of those who sought work.

I do not share the view expressed by the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands that the majority of the students will be unsuccessful in finding work this summer. I think we will be more successful than that. I am sure that more than 12 per cent, more than half, will be successful; and I hope that with the co-operation of the private sector we can do as well as we did last year. But as I say, the job is going to be a lot tougher.

Mr. Diefenbaker: A further supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. I mentioned 12 per cent, and it is interesting that the minister said that 5 per cent will be employed by the government of Canada and that he hopes an additional 5 per cent will be employed by private interests. This figure of 12 per cent is well based. I wish the minister would look into this matter again, because the situation is serious. Young men and women are graduating from university today or are ending their terms, and the promise that the Canadian Chamber of Commerce will do something is scarcely anything but an abdication of government responsibility.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, the right hon. gentleman, I am sure [Mr. MacEachen.]

unintentionally, misunderstood my use of the expression "5 per cent". It is not 5 per cent of the total number of students seeking employment, but 5 per cent of the total federal employment service, or the total number employed by the federal service. This year we are employing 11,365 students. This represents an increase of 27 per cent in student employment over the last two years. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is asking its members to employ a number of students equivalent to 5 per cent of their normal work force. If this is done, very few students will be without work this summer.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, the minister having earned the applause of those sitting around him, may I ask him, on the basis of what has been projected for this summer, how many students will get jobs? He must have some projection or some realization of what private industry will take.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. MacEachen: Mr. Speaker, it is impossible to make this projection at the moment. The universities are just closing. The students are just coming on to the labour market. I do believe, however, it is irresponsible to suggest that only 12 per cent of those seeking work will obtain it and it is equally irresponsible to say that a majority of students seeking work will not obtain jobs. That is a pretty bleak pronouncement to be coming from the House of Commons when the private sector and government are attempting to create a favourable market for students.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The right hon. gentleman seeks the floor for a question of privilege.

Mr. Diefenbaker: Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear. I said that at the present time, in respect of the western universities, only 12 per cent of the students now have any prospect of employment according to—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Now that we understand the right hon. gentleman and the minister, we might go on to another supplementary.

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the Minister of Manpower and Immigration.