

Office of Education

school many students found that they had few occupational skills with which to enter the labour market. In an attempt to alleviate this problem, the federal government introduced a new program for technical education in 1937 with the Unemployment and Agricultural Assistance Act. This act, directed towards maintaining the morale and increasing the employability of young people, was negotiated in agreement with the provinces, on a cost-sharing basis, through the establishment of various occupational training projects. Eligibility was limited to those between the ages of 18 and 30. Emphasizing vocational and technical skills, this act initially provided funds of about \$2.5 million during its two years, but corrected only to a limited degree the inadequacies of technical and vocational education.

The Rowell-Sirois commission was appointed in 1937 to make an assessment of the economic and financial basis of confederation; the distribution of federal and provincial powers; and federal-provincial financial relations. While its mandate did not extend to education, the commission felt that equality of educational opportunity did come within its domain. According to the commission, the concept of "education" had changed and expanded to include new dimensions since the time of the British North America Act. In view of this, the commission recommended that "the federal government should have full power to provide employment aid for those recognized as employable . . . (which would) make the training of unemployed youth a matter of even greater federal concern than at present." The commission assumed that the provinces would provide a system of courses to those Canadians requiring further training.

While the commission stated that a free hand in education was vital to provincial autonomy, it identified certain problems arising in this context. Representations were made to the commission concerning "the existence in several provinces of a sense of grievance which may well contribute to national disunity as well as to lack of harmony within the province concerned." Although the commission lamented the disparity in educational opportunity throughout the country, it made no relevant recommendations. Solutions rested on financial proposals which would place the provinces in a position to meet their responsibilities for education, if they chose to do so.

The commission also suggested that a council, analogous to the National Research Council, could be established to support research work in the social sciences in Canadian universities and elsewhere. The commission suggested, furthermore, that it might be appropriate for the federal government to establish a national library.

Growing Canadian cultural awareness and concern for a Canadian identity prompted the federal government in 1949 to appoint the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. This commission, generally known as the Massey commission, after its chairman, released its report in June 1951. In the field of higher learning, the commission saw three major problems: scarcity of financial aid to the arts and humanities; the financial condition of universities; and orientation toward a small educated elite. As the

commission noted, the number of veterans enrolling as students was quickly diminishing and, as a result, the federal aid that came with them was eroding. The commission believed that action was urgently required in this sector and that it was the duty of the federal government to assist in some way.

In view of the fact that the Canadian constitution did not forbid financial assistance to a citizen in order to help him to carry on studies in his chosen field, the commission did not feel that it would be improper to recommend federal aid in the form of contributions to individuals. A further recommendation was the continuation of federal support for the program of the National Research Council. As for disciplines outside of the boundaries of natural science, the commission recommended the establishment of what is today the Canada Council and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, with the stipulation that such councils receive an annual grant from the Government of Canada for the establishment and maintenance of an adequate number of scholarships, studentships and bursaries for post-graduate students of Canadian universities in the humanities, the social sciences and law. Further recommendations included a broadened and improved system of aid to undergraduates, and funds for exchange scholarships.

In 1963, in response to the increasing articulation of Canadian language and cultural problems, the Government of Canada appointed the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism. The commission, also known as the Laurendeau-Dunton commission, received a broad mandate to inquire into and report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races. The commission was also to consider the contribution of other ethnic groups to Canadian society.

As a result of this mandate, the commission devoted much of its time to an investigation of the field of education, which is closely linked with language and culture. The commission examined the education of the official language minorities in each province, the teaching of French and English as second languages, and the image of the other cultural group which students may derive from their studies.

The commission affirmed that while education was a provincial responsibility, it was reasonable to expect that the federal government should reimburse the provinces for the extra costs involved in providing facilities for students from both language groups. In view of this, it recommended that the federal government accept in principle the responsibility for the additional costs involved in providing education in the official minority language.

● (1652)

The historical developments I have described illustrate clearly the philosophy of federal financial involvement in education. The Government of Canada has responded to changing educational demands which relate to federal responsibilities, and it has become actively involved in financial support to education while completely respecting provincial