

*Education*

federal government. They do hesitate, however, because I believe they are afraid that there will be some strings attached to it that are obnoxious. I find that in the British commonwealth Canada is the only country in which the federal authority does not contribute up to fifty per cent of the cost of education. Teachers probably occupy the most important position in society, and have greater influence than any other individuals in society upon the youth of our land. I think we should pay more attention to this matter of education. Any aid that the dominion may see fit to extend will certainly be appreciated by those who are burdened with taxation at the moment. I think that aid could be extended on the per pupil per capita basis more fairly than in any other way.

**Mr. Clarence Gillis (Cape Breton South):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to say a few words on this resolution. It has been before this house on at least three occasions and has received a thorough discussion. The last time it was before the house I was of the opinion that the government intended to do something about it. The Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) was interested and I think we all felt reasonably sure that it would be on the agenda of the last dominion-provincial conference; but apparently it was not. Federal aid to education, in my opinion, means merely subsidy to education; and the government is fairly strongly committed in the matter of subsidies. They have no hesitation in subsidizing an industry that is considered to be uneconomic but necessary to the economy of the country. They subsidize the grain industry; they heavily subsidize the coal and the steel industry in Nova Scotia and, as my hon. friend reminds me, they subsidize the gold mining industry. If the government's policy is to subsidize the gold, steel, coal and grain industries, I think they should not be averse to subsidizing education.

I am concerned only with one aspect of the matter, namely teachers' salaries particularly in the "have-not" provinces. I know that in the maritimes the teachers' salaries leave much to be desired. I have not the same grievance as has the hon. member for Selkirk (Mr. Bryce). I think the teachers in my own province are highly qualified. In the matter of providing schools, I think a good job has been done throughout the province; I know in my own end of the country a real good job has been done in the past three or four years. But the teachers' salaries in Nova Scotia are extremely poor.

By a press report today I notice that this matter is before the provincial government at the present session of the legislature. One member in his speech gave a great many

[Mr. White (Middlesex East).]

figures which I am not going to read all through, but he stated that the teachers on the island of Cape Breton received, on an average, \$1,190 a year. That is a rather unreasonable salary for a qualified person in this day and age. There is not a labourer in this country who receives a small income of that kind. The incomes paid in any of the skilled trades put that figure to shame. That is not much more than the old age pension because, with pension and other earnings, the old age pensioner is allowed \$1,080 a year. But here is a teacher, who takes a child from the time he is in the first grade and pilots him right through high school, receiving an average of \$1,190 a year. If we are prepared to subsidize commodities, I think we should be prepared to subsidize education because the moulding of citizens is, I think, a much greater and a much more serious responsibility that falls upon the government.

I am not so greatly concerned about the universities, because if a person gets through high school he has a fairly good grounding in citizenship; at least he has sufficient grounding to go out and do something for himself in many fields. In the matter of building citizenship I think the most important grades are the lower ones, because boys and girls in those grades are in their formative years. Teachers who receive the kind of income to which I have referred certainly cannot put their minds on their work and do the kind of job they could be doing. To boil the matter down and simplify it, it is a matter of money. It is a matter of the federal government's determining whether or not they are prepared to give some assistance to our future citizens by relieving from economic insecurity the teachers who have charge of them in their formative years, so that they may be able to think in terms of building better citizens and a better Canada. The matter is a financial one.

Someone may say that the stumbling block is the British North America Act and that it is necessary to sell the idea to the provinces. That is not my conception of the situation at the present time. The members assembled here at the present time in this House of Commons last year approved a measure whereby they undertook the responsibility of amending the constitution of Canada in Canada, in this House of Commons, in any respect with the exception of language and religion. If the House of Commons, in its wisdom, decides that federal aid to education is necessary in order to raise the incomes to which I have just referred, we in this House of Commons can pass the necessary legislation, regardless of whether one or two provinces want to go along with us or not. It is just a