

Private Members' Business

dians are facing in education can only be taken up through defined, coordinated and joint initiatives.

It is only too obvious that we must act through partnership and consensus, given the primacy of education among provincial responsibilities. We have already told the member for Windsor—St. Clair that we understand his concerns regarding the future of education in Canada and that we support his desire to promote a reform of education at the national level.

I want to tell all the members of this House as well as the Canadian population that this problem is at the top of the national issues on our agenda. We have set up partnerships with businesses and unions, with the field of education and with social services, in order to make all Canadians aware of the great challenge of our times: the development of our human resources to foster a modern economy.

The present government recognizes that Canadians would like to see, by the year 2000, in eight short years from now, with the approval and the cooperation of the provinces, objectives for all of Canada. I can already hear the Bloc Quebecois members say that education is a provincial matter. We fully agree with that. However, I must tell you that in Quebec 30 per cent of students drop out of school. The rate is the same in Ontario. In western Canada, it is between 30 and 40 per cent. In Newfoundland it is a little bit higher but, over all, it stands at 30 per cent.

This means that whether the education is in French or in English, whether you live in the distinct society or elsewhere in Canada, there is a national problem that remains the same. Thirty per cent of students drop out of school. We must stop closing our eyes and pretending, like the members of the Bloc Quebecois do when they say that education is a local problem, a provincial issue. This is a provincial problem, yes, but it is also a competition problem and a national problem because we find the same problem in every Canadian province.

I would like also to tell Canadians that the efforts currently undertaken by the provinces to create a uniform system of educational educators is supported by the federal government. Even the Quebec government agrees with this objective.

At their last meeting in August 1991, the premiers asked the Council of Ministers of Education to pursue their efforts in that direction. This government commends and strongly support this initiative. It is also of the opinion that this body is the best qualified for this kind of national educational objectives. We fully understand that if we fall seriously behind on training in comparison with other countries—and those are our real competitors; they are not the anglophones and the francophones in Canada, but Canada, both the Canadians and the Quebecers, against the other industrialized nations—our manpower and our industry will be badly equipped to fight against our competitors in a world economy based on information.

Those are the reasons, that prompted the federal government to achieve this national consensus among the provinces whose collaboration we will be asking and whom we will be consulting before taking decisions.

On October 29, my hon. colleague, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, sent out a discussion paper on learning entitled "Learning Well—Living Well". This paper is part and parcel of our national strategy which is to move toward life-long learning and toward developing national goals. The first one—there is no harm in that, but it is important that it be attained in Quebec as well as in the rest of Canada—is a 50 per cent reduction in the illiteracy rate and ensuring that 90 per cent of Canadians get a high school diploma or the equivalent. What difference does it make, Mr. Speaker, if you require this from a Quebecer or an Ontarian? We can have that kind of national standards without encroaching upon provincial jurisdiction regarding education.

We also want to double, in Quebec as well as elsewhere—and I think it is a worthwhile goal that we could pursue—the number of post-secondary graduates in science. We want to increase fourfold the training provided by employers to their employees. Training could be given in French in Quebec and in English in the rest of the country, but it will all be co-ordinated nationally so that we can compete with the Americans, the Germans, the Japanese—

Mr. Della Noce: The Italians.