

Education

discontinue the unnatural divisions amongst our people, then we must think in terms of educational institutions which will help us to grow up nationally and internationally. This is the field in which the federal government can give leadership. I trust that for the sake of Canada, its future and its place in the world of today, we will broaden our view as to the place of the federal government in the field of education.

Mr. Walter Pitman (Peterborough): I am sure, Mr. Speaker, we are all in accord with the resolution which has been introduced by the hon. member for Davenport. It is a moderate and sensible resolution. I am sure other members will want to speak on it, so I will keep my remarks to a minimum.

As he has suggested, we in this house must concern ourselves more and more with the problem of education at the national level. The main problem, of course, is the fact, as hon. members realize, that this nation dwells under the British North America Act. We have a written constitution which provides that education shall be within the exclusive control of the various provinces.

In a sense, the fathers of confederation were wise. They realized that education should always be very closely related to the parents and that the parents, in the last resort, should have some control over the education which their youngsters were receiving. Yet on the other hand we realize today that this is a very different world. There are certainly no two ways about it: the education which was being dealt with at the conferences in Charlottetown and Quebec is not the education which we are dealing with today.

In 1867 education was regarded as being entirely arts training. It was reading and writing. At the higher levels it was philosophy and literature. Therefore education was entirely concerned with language and religion and therefore, because of the obvious necessity of confederation, education had to be placed within the bounds of provincial control.

Of course today we realize that education has many facets, that it is training in many different areas which have no relationship, or very little relationship, to either language or religion. It means training and education at different levels. Although no one in this house and no party would want to invade or in any way violate the sensibilities of those who are from the province of Quebec, I am sure all of us realize the necessity of taking a very important look at this matter and arriving at a redefinition of education as it relates to the British North America Act.

The second difference that we must consider in the way we look at education and the

way the fathers of confederation looked at it, is that at that time education was a relatively simple and inexpensive matter. So far as the average community was concerned it simply involved building a little school-house, getting a retired army officer to inhabit that school for a few months a year, buying a few books and providing a little bit of wood for the stove. That virtually amounted to the complete expenditure which education really meant to the taxpayers. In a sense it was undemocratic in that those who were more wealthy could send their children off to boarding school or overseas to get further education at a higher level.

Of course today we realize that expenditure on education is probably the most terrifying aspect in any budget, be it municipal or provincial. I am sure all of us coming from different constituencies realize the extent to which the cost of education is concerning those in other levels of government. In 1867 the fathers of confederation, in their wisdom, assigned the taxing powers for education to the various levels of government but now, with this tremendous springing out of education, this taxation problem is completely out of balance.

We must now consider that education involves not only monstrous expenditures but has fantastic implications. The whole problem of work force, employment and unemployment, productivity and our capability to compete with other nations which perhaps have more skilled labour forces, and the whole question of national prosperity, depend on what attention we give to the problem of education.

We have been trying to divide it from the exclusiveness of the British North America Act by various methods and I am sure all hon. members would conclude that this is not the best way of dealing with it. We know that the immigration branch does a great deal in the area of education, as does the Department of Agriculture and the Department of National Health and Welfare. Only last week we spent a great deal of time talking about the extent to which the Department of Labour is concerned with the problem of education.

One does not want to insert a problem of controversy here, but this is what I believe to be the primary problem, that we at the national level are having to give out money to be spent by others at other levels of government without having any control and without being able to give any direction or any purpose to the way in which this money is spent. We are unable to give any direction in terms of priority as to where we think the money should go, and this is the reason why often plans which are well recommended and