

*Government Orders*

standards as far as objectives are concerned and meet some very exacting administrative conditions.

Right off the bat, I want to say that since the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, the most dramatic event for Canadian students has been the gradual withdrawal of the federal government from post-secondary education funding. Clearly, this gradual withdrawal has been really detrimental to our young people's access to post-secondary education.

If we could show graphs in the House, you would see on this graph from a study by the Economic Council of Canada, that this withdrawal shows as a descending curve. What were the consequences of this gradual withdrawal? Post-secondary education being essential, especially at the present time, the provinces had a tendency to fill the void, that is to say put more money in.

And the poorer they were, the more they had to put in. Quebec, despite its large population, is far less wealthy than Ontario. A study was done by the Economic Council of Canada, which was abolished by the previous government, as we all know, but not re-established by the Liberal government

• (2200)

The Economic Council of Canada said that from 1977 to the last year considered in the 1992 study Quebec spent twice as much of its own money on post-secondary education as Ontario which is wealthier.

This proves that what is important in Canada is not, despite what the government says, to pass this bill quickly—I am not saying that we are going to filibuster—what I am saying is that this bill will not change substantially the situation of the vast majority of students in need, those who require substantial assistance to complete their post-secondary education.

The truth is, this bill is grossly inadequate. It is inadequate and it radically transforms the relationship between the provinces and the federal government.

In fact, I must say that since 1964, when the first piece of legislation regarding student loans was passed, the relevant authority, the authorities which were going to decide which universities, colleges would be eligible institutions for student loans purposes, the appropriate authorities entitled to exercise the provinces' democratic responsibilities under the Canadian Constitution and determine which students would qualify for loans, were the provinces themselves—or are still the provinces until the vote—I am still trying to convince government members of this—, until the government's intentions become law, and change the current situation.

Under the Canadian Constitution, education is an area of provincial jurisdiction. The provinces are primarily responsible

for choosing who, among their needy students, is going to have access to post-secondary education.

From now on, in a unique, historical move, a move never seen before in any legislation, the government decides, on its own accord, to deprive the provinces, which have primary jurisdiction under the Constitution, of the right to designate the appropriate authority, as they have been doing since 1964 under the various acts regarding student loans. Once the bill is passed, and that is why the Bloc has been trying so vigorously to convince the government it was on the wrong track, the provinces will no longer have this responsibility which is rightfully theirs under the present legislation.

Some will say that what is going on in the world right now has compelled Canada to get involved in education. The Canadian government must ensure that young Canadians have access to post-secondary education, as if the provinces were unable to do so. The focus is wrong.

• (2205)

The provinces, which have jurisdiction, have extremely limited resources, and the central government, the federal government, the Government of Canada, wants to take their place. It only puts another \$1 million in the kitty for all the provinces of Canada. And in moving speeches it tells us that young Canadians can now have hope; they can hope to have adequate skills in an increasingly demanding society.

This is an attempt to camouflage, to disguise a relentless desire to centralize, a sort of overweening pride that makes them think that if it is done from Ottawa, it will be better. They want to decide instead of the provinces what is the provinces' own responsibility, namely ensuring that as many of their young people as possible can go to university and that post-secondary institutions can as many young people as possible.

This bill is hiding something under the guise of generosity, of providing educational opportunities that young women, single mothers and the handicapped did not have before. It takes powers away from the provinces.

Why can I say that? Quite simply, because under the Student Loans Act, whereby the central government has helped the provinces meet their responsibilities for education, from 1964 until now, the provinces have made the most important decisions on education.

What are these decisions? First, deciding which institutions are eligible institutions for student loans purposes. You can understand that a university whose students could not obtain loans would be doomed. You can also understand that a student who is refused a loan he needs is in an extremely difficult situation; it is almost impossible for him to pursue his education.