

There are a great many areas of education that require some national focus for which the national education council that I propose would be a significant step forward in accomplishing.

However, I cannot evince a great deal of confidence in the capacity of the government to understand how useful it would be to it to have an independent source of policy studies, curriculum studies, methodology studies, in the sphere of education when just recently two significant bodies that have called attention to the issue of education, the Science Council of Canada and the Economic Council of Canada, were eliminated by this government presumably because those two agencies were capable of and did criticize government policy.

And so I stand here before you proposing yet another independent arm's length organization that would have an analogous role with respect to education that the Science Council and the Economic Council had concerning science and economics respectively.

But the nature of the council would be such that it would be funded by the provincial governments, the federal government, private sources, industry and labour. It would have as its role the initiation of studies such as those I described earlier without any regulatory or other powers except to provide information, to provide studies, to provide policy proposals, to carry out research within its own walls or to commission research in the universities and other institutions that are capable of pursuing it.

To summarize, Canada stands alone among the industrialized nations of the world in having some capacity to develop education goals and means of achieving those goals which are coherent with the educational goals of the country. Canada desperately needs it. We have delayed it too long. Our prosperity depends upon it.

It is clear that if we are to become competitive, it is through the capacity to invest our skills, our knowledge, our capacity to create in our products and services so that we can produce those things necessary to sell.

That means that the economic agenda should be an agenda of opportunity. We should exhibit a commitment to that agenda of opportunity by having a means by which education throughout this country can be improved.

Private Members' Business

I submit that a national education council is an appropriate means. I hope that this House will support that proposition.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Denis Pronovost (Saint-Maurice): Mr. Speaker, I would first of all like to thank my colleague from Laval-Est, the parliamentary secretary, for kindly letting me speak first on this motion.

I heard my colleague from Windsor—St. Clair talk about education. I am a father and it made me think of my three daughters, Marie-Ève, who is ten, Pascale, seven, and Gabrielle, six. I wonder if my children, when they are older, will ask themselves whether today's adults really fulfilled their responsibilities for education. They will probably wonder if it was another federal-provincial quarrel on whether to have national education standards or not. Will we have another fight about that, especially between Quebec and the federal government?

• (1920)

And I told myself that there are few children in Canada and in Quebec who think in terms of constitutional battles; rather, they want us to preserve their future. I believe that the role of this Parliament is to preserve that future by establishing national standards for education. The role of this government and of this House is to work towards that goal.

Allow me first to discuss the motion of the member for Windsor—St. Clair. I want to tell him as well as the House that the quality of education in our country is, and has always been, one of the main concerns of the government. Nobody in this country can claim that having a school drop-out rate of 30 per cent is an acceptable figure. Nobody can claim that our literacy rate as well as the rate for basic calculus knowledge are sufficiently high. And, Mr. Speaker, nobody can claim that in the field of education you can simply maintain the *status quo* to face an increasingly stiffer international competition, and to rely more on industries and occupations that are based on knowledge.

More and more Canadians think that we must take a serious look at our attitude as regards education. We are all aware that we must review our objectives, our training programs and our priorities in the field of education. However, it is also clear that the challenges that Cana-