

Canada Student Loans Act

year. In the light of that total amount the student was automatically disqualified, even though he might have been one of two or three members of the family attending university at the same time. The point I wish to make is that the program should be administered on the basis of need in light of the total financial picture of the family concerned, and not on the basis of the old, long outmoded means formula that was applied in the past.

• (5:00 p.m.)

I do not think there is any need for a complete and comprehensive speech at this time on the general question of university finances. However, I should like the government to think beyond this intermediate step in the direction of solving the growing financial problems of a student population whose number is rapidly increasing. The provincial governments have already occupied this area to a substantial extent. It was for this reason that Ottawa was thinking and speaking in terms of bursaries rather than in terms of repayable loans. Beneficial as it is to large numbers of students, the loans program does not in any way deal with the needs of the student who is denied an opportunity for university training because of his poor economic position. Other hon. members have drawn attention to the fact that there is a real problem of poverty in Canada; that there are families at the lower levels of the income ladder which cannot afford to send their children to university, simply because no money is available.

It might be argued that the loans program makes up for this deficiency. In fact, it does not, because it fails to meet the needs of those living at the poverty level, those whom the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) is trying to assist in the white paper on taxation which he brought down recently. It seems the minister intends to rob Peter to pay Paul; he has adopted the Robin Hood philosophy of taking from those who have and giving to those who have not. It appears to me that this same philosophy should, then, be applied with respect to university students in need of financial assistance. Back in 1963 the government promised in most definite terms to make 10,000 bursaries available for Canadians of exceptional ability who would otherwise be unable to enter university. We pursued this subject in the House for several years. I was one who was interested in it. This afternoon I was looking over my file and I found there the record of a long series of questions which

had been put to Mr. Walter Gordon when he was Minister of Finance and to the former Prime Minister, the Right Hon. Lester B. Pearson.

Each of these gentlemen had promised in specific terms that the bursary program would be implemented within a matter of months. Since then, years have rolled by and the promise has yet to be fulfilled. I suggest to the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Gray) who is handling this legislation this afternoon that here is an area in which he might well become occupied in more than a housekeeping sense. Let us get on with the next stage, that of attending to the real area of need, by supplying these long-promised 10,000 bursaries, promise of which formed part of the 60 glorious days of decision under the late Pearson administration.

There is no need to labour the point further. This is merely housekeeping legislation bringing an old statute up to date. What we want now is some pioneering in this field of public assistance as applied to the needs of university students.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Caouette (Témiscamingue): Mr. Speaker, the bill under consideration concerning student loans is rather important.

This afternoon, I heard the Minister without Portfolio (Mr. Gray) set out the purpose of this bill.

I also heard some hon. members deal with the situation the students experience in Canada and, with the exception of the hon. member for Champlain (Mr. Matte), all more or less said the same thing. Our students lack the necessary means to further their studies and the government intends to increase the amount made available for education under Bill C-135.

The hon. member for Gloucester (Mr. Breaux), for instance, said that some students with well-to-do parents did not want their parents to pay for their studies but would rather borrow.

• (5:10 p.m.)

Mr. Speaker, I suggest,—and I would ask the hon. member if he can give proof to the contrary,—that students who can afford to pay their studies do not usually apply for a bank loan and pay an interest rate of 9 or 10 per cent. It is those without any income, those for whom the amendments to this bill are intended, who will borrow \$1,000 for a school