

Canada Student Loans Act

the fees of the students but also give them a certain living allowance.

I should like to mention one other point, Mr. Speaker, in connection with aid to students other than by loans or scholarships. The hon. member for Edmonton West seemed to suggest that there is something all right about the element of struggle, that if you had to work hard in order to get through university—and perhaps the Minister of Finance had to work his way through university—so did a lot of other people too. I remember that when I went to university I had to spend three days a week working in a warehouse and I spent three days a week attending university, and I can testify that is not the best system. I had to miss out on sports as well as on intellectual activities.

I think that the element of struggle is rather old-fashioned now. I think we should make it easier for people to go to university and be able to obtain the benefits of university life. I do not mind students working during the summertime but I think that while at university their attention should be centred on the activities in the classroom and outside the classroom.

• (4:10 p.m.)

Last week the Minister of Finance in his introductory remarks said that the student loans fund was one stage in the government plan for students, presumably he meant that the scholarships would have to come later. This afternoon the Minister without Portfolio made reference to the same thing. It is an interim step, and he said rather vaguely that he hoped we would be able to achieve tuition free universities in Canada. But how long will this take? The government has now been in office for three years. We have got no farther than the student loan plan. When is the next step going to take place? By next year the first group of students, those who entered university in 1963 when the government took office, will graduate. How many graduations will there be before we get beyond the student loan fund?

I know it is very easy to say that there should be tuition free universities in Canada. But if this country, which is second or third in the world in standard of living, cannot afford it, who can? We must make efforts to this end. It is being done in many places. Many parts of the United States do not charge students college fees. In France, for the most able students in any case, I believe university is completely free. I believe in

[Mr. Prittie.]

Uruguay this is the case. Canada should also do this.

How long will it be before we see this I do not know. The Liberals are frequently reminded during election campaigns that a national health insurance plan has been in their program for a long time. It was born in the same year I was, 1919. My hair is getting thin and grey and we have not yet got it. I hope it will not be 40 years before we get a scholarship and tuition free system for students in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Maurice Allard (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, the bill now before us is another instance of the constitutional hodge-podge in which we have been plunged by the present government and it is another indication of the continued mix-up in federal-provincial relations. This bill concerns student loans.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. members who stated previously that Canadian students in all provinces need special and substantial help in the present development of our economy, of our industry and our education needs; I am in full agreement with them on this point. But where I differ, it is when the present federal government introduces a bill to amend legislation passed in 1964, to alter or increase the requirements of federal loans to students. On this point I think we are missing the boat. It is most unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, but this is not a federal government responsibility, even though I may be the sole voice to be raised in this house on that point, I am raising it now and I shall continue to do so until the end of my mandate, because we are going at it backwards and I repeat, this is creating across the country tensions and pressures that bode no good for national unity.

I was quite amused a moment ago when the hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond (Mr. Prittie) mentioned in his argument that the central government was justified in dealing with education but that he lacked the time to elaborate at this point. Strangely enough, I have never heard a single member during this session or in earlier sessions, when I followed discussions of this house, put forward a basic argument in order to prove that the central government is justified in assuming educational responsibilities, either through student loans or scholarships, which are to be distributed shortly as promised in the platform of the Liberal party, or still by any other indirect or implicit means, as