

*Office of Education*

hailed as enormous advantages. I can remember the day when it was forecast that television would remove the teacher from the classroom and would take over the entire educational system, save for the few people necessary to make the films. It has not worked out that way.

The people who have suffered most educationally in this country are those whose education was entrusted to the television box flickering away in the darkened classroom. I taught in such a school for a while, a new experience for me. I can remember that shortly after I began my teaching there, one of the great federal-provincial conferences started and was televised, just as this recent one was.

At the time I was teaching Canadian history in a school which was set up with devices to aid the presentation of televised material. All I had to do was call the co-ordinator, tell him what I needed and when I needed it, and everything would be set up for me. We darkened the room and the prime minister of the day and the provincial premiers began to move across the screen. I looked around the classroom and noticed a strange thing: student after student was folding his or her arms, placing them on the desk and putting his or her head forward. I realized that this had become a pattern in the school and that the darkening of the windows meant an hour of sleep until the lights came on again. Just because this marvel in modern technology came into the classroom did not mean that the next 60 minutes were going to be particularly educational, except in the role of restoration through sleep that had been lost the previous evening watching the late, late show. There was a double irony in the educational advance there.

I wandered up and down the aisles tapping people on the shoulder, pointing to the screen and saying, "Look, I brought this in for you to watch". There were expressions of surprise mingled with indignation that I should be so rude as to interrupt the rest period which they had already taken for granted. The students took the signal of the television starting as a time to drop off. It is the loss of nerve which is so terribly important, and it will take more than an office of federal information to restore that. What is required is the expertise to enable teachers to approach the classroom and the students with something to offer and with confidence in their role.

● (1632)

I believe the only successful educational process these days is the infectious one where the student captures interest and zest from another person, usually a teacher of ability with knowledge and scholarship. Those are some of the factors that have been missing from our classrooms.

I am sure anyone who has taught school in recent years has had the experience of sitting in a staff room when another teacher rushes in and asks if anyone has a film. One then knows that that teacher cannot face the class at that moment and wants any film to fill in. If someone in the staff room has a film on splitting the molecule, on ancient Greece or modern art, it is grabbed and immediately placed between the teacher and the student.

[Mr. Johnston (Okanagan-Kootenay).]

Some years ago in the school where I was teaching I argued against the semester system, saying it was based on the philosophy of things that could not be borne. Certainly it saves money for the schoolboards. One of the purposes in reducing the school year from ten months to four and a half months was that the teacher only had to bear the class for four and half months and the class only had to bear the teacher for four and half months. It was assumed they could stand each other for that long but that ten months was too much. There has been an improvement with the introduction of the mini-course; the period that has to be borne has been reduced to about six weeks!

Therein lie some of the problems of education in today's world, Mr. Speaker, and money will not solve them. If the purpose of education is that it be a clearing house for information, more power to it.

Just the other day I was delighted to have a visit from a young lady from the Unity campaign. She brought along a kit containing beautiful material on Canada, presented in small doses, and told me that it would be available for schools—a hundred years too late.

I should like this office of education to be given the power—which I know it will never get—to demand that no student in the country be granted a secondary school leaving certificate of any kind unless he or she is able to answer two questions. First, he or she should be asked to give a simple explanation of the federal system. One of the greatest faults of our system is that people increasingly believe we live in a congressional system. They will argue that we should have elections every four years because the United States has elections every four years. They do not know that the United States have elections every two years because we do not see the mid-term elections here in Canada, only the four-year one.

I did not realize the profound confusion that exists about the federal system in the country until I campaigned in 1974. I knocked on doors and told people I was the Progressive Conservative candidate for the riding in the coming election. Many of them replied, "Good, we have to get those people out of Victoria." Of course, they did not use the word "people". That was in 1974. There was a time when I would have stood on the step and explained the difference between a federal and a provincial election. By 1974, however, I just said "Yes, I am just the fellow to do it," and went on to the next door.

The other question that should be put to students, and none should receive a secondary school certificate until they can answer it, is: What is meant in Canada by responsible government? I realize there are some dangers in that question because we have not had responsible government in this country since 1968. We lost it in that dark week when the government was defeated twice on the floor of the House and did not resign. We may have regained it in 1974 so perhaps one should say it was lost for those six years and restored in the defeat of the government in 1974, and the subsequent election. Perhaps if we could once more teach responsible government and what it means in this country, it would do wonders for unifying the country again.