

*Private Members' Business*

I am not so sure the kind of tax credit he is proposing in his bill is really going to help children from disadvantaged families in Canada. If parents opt to send their child to private school we are talking about thousands of dollars a year. That is beyond the reach of the overwhelming majority of Canadians. That is particularly true of private schools in the United States. Provinces adhering to their responsibilities will underwrite the cost of sending children to those institutions if they feel it is appropriate and necessary.

At this time it is not appropriate for the Parliament of Canada to intrude into the field of primary and secondary education, an area in which it has not previously trod. Perhaps when we hear from the former deputy minister for Manitoba later in the debate we may find that position is either sustained or is not sustained.

The federal government nevertheless has been involved in education in this country and, indeed, is involved heavily today but it has been involved primarily through support for higher education at the post-secondary level where students have to pay a share of their own tuition costs on an individual basis. Tuition in primary and secondary schools in Canada is covered 100 per cent by the taxpayer through appropriate taxation vehicles.

Where the federal government has been involved is at the post-secondary level only. Indeed, the commitment of the government is very strong and has been rather profound. I might point out, for example, the government this year will be contributing \$6 billion through the EPF program for post-secondary education.

I might point out that 215,000 students in Canada will benefit from Canada Student Loans with an average of \$3,000 per student. These are targeted primarily at students from low income and moderate income homes.

I might point out also that support for post-secondary education exists through personal income tax now through the tax credit on tuition fees, the tax credit each month for full-time study. Credits are also transferable to the spouse, parents, or grandparents of the student on whose behalf the tuition has been paid. Indeed, up to

\$500 of scholarship, bursary, or fellowship income is tax free as well in this country.

These last four benefits add up to \$280 million of tax credit provided by the Government of Canada in support of students at the post-secondary level.

As to the budgets in 1992, for example, the budget made further increases in these benefits that will assist 600,000 students in Canada and 400,000 supporting taxpayers. I do not think there is any question, considering the fact that technically the Government of Canada has no jurisdiction in education, that this Government of Canada is making a rather profound contribution and a most significant contribution to education.

At the same time the other side of the issue brought forward by my hon. friend has to do with the needs of Canadians with disabilities. I must say I am very proud with the progress that has been made in the last couple of years and particularly since the two reports of the Standing Committee on the Status of Disabled Persons in Canada which this government has responded to. In September of last year the Prime Minister, who has been such a leading force in recognizing the need to assist disabled Canadians to be integrated fully into Canadian society and to have an opportunity to participate fully in all aspects of Canadian life, made an announcement. The Prime Minister announced the national strategy for the integration of persons with disabilities. This strategy involves 10 government departments. It involves an expenditure of 158 million new dollars over the five years of the program. In addition to that I might mention that the budgets of 1991 and 1992 have provided additional tax benefits to Canadians with disabilities, benefits that are targeted toward facilitating the integration of persons with disabilities fully into Canadian society.

• (1720)

In summary, what I am saying and indeed would say on behalf of the government is that while we agree with the very commendable concern articulated by my hon. friend opposite, I think it is more appropriate that his concern, as I have done and as other members of this House I am sure have done, should urge provincial governments to ensure that they fulfil their responsibilities to children