

Who is making use of the Canada Student Loans Program? According to figures obtained in the Annual Report of the Canadian Student Loans Program for the loan year 1989-90, the following can be said about the program:

- approximately 1.9 million full-time students negotiated loans of \$6.3 billion from the inception of the program in 1964 until July 31, 1990;
- in 1989-90, 215,000 students received Canada student loans with a value of \$600 million;
- 23 per cent of full-time university students in Canada enrolled in degree programs received Canada student loans;
- women continue to outnumber men as recipients of Canada student loans. Loan authorizations for women increased from 52 per cent of the total in 1985-86 to 56 per cent in 1989-90;
- students aged 25 years and older negotiated about 27 per cent of all Canada student loans in 1989-90 as compared to 18 per cent in 1985-86.

Honourable senators, the Atlantic Provinces Economic Council, in their October 1992 *Atlantic Report*, states:

The marginal benefits of more education are greater in Atlantic Canada than in Canada as a whole... The narrower economic base in Atlantic Canada puts a greater premium on more education.

If we look at our education system as a whole, from elementary school to post-secondary education, we must recognize the importance and interdependency of all levels.

The amount of education one attains directly affects one's earning power. In Atlantic Canada, the participation rate in the labour force for people with grade 8 or less is 34 per cent, compared with 84.2 per cent for university graduates. The average unemployment rate between 1981 and 1991 for Atlantic Canadians with grade 8 or less was 20.5 per cent. However, the average unemployment rate for university graduates was only 5 per cent.

Canadians are recognizing the need to attain higher education. Looking specifically at the Atlantic region, there were 71,500 students in post-secondary institutions in the region in 1991-92, compared with less than 60,000 in 1985-86. Degree-granting institutions will dominate with 85 per cent of total enrolment attending in 1991-92.

In closing, honourable senators, I wish to quote directly from the brief presented by the Canadian Federation of

Students to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance during its examination of this bill:

Students who are presently depending on financial aid to pursue their college or university education have identified a number of problems with Canada's student financial aid program. Some of these criticisms include the unrealistically low weekly loan limit, the lack of flexibility for student borrowers, as well as the lack of national standards for the provision of financial assistance and the absence of a national grants program. The Canadian Federation of Students believes that access to post-secondary education must be made free of barriers, and today's student assistance programs do not achieve this goal. The federal government's proposed changes to the Canada Student Loans Program moves us further away from this goal. Bill C-76 is the beginning of the end of the Canada Student Loans Program.

Honourable senators, we Canadians value our education system and recognize the importance of securing our future prosperity. We, as parliamentarians, must make it a priority. I urge you all to vote against this bill.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I rise much more in sorrow than in anger at this point, and I am prompted to rise by the speech made by our colleague, Senator Kinsella, last night. I was amazed he took the position he did. In fact, if you look at the argument he presented, it was an argument not to change the Canada Student Loans Program right now but to leave it as it is, and to have a program evaluation. That is the cause he was pushing. I do not object to that. All programs of government should be subject to program evaluation, but why change the program now before you do the program evaluation? Surely that is not the proper course to follow.

If my honourable friend is convinced that there must be improvements or changes, let us see what they are. Why suddenly take an ad hoc position that we will implement changes without an evaluation? Surely that is not the reasonable way to approach the question.

Honourable senators, I know there have been problems with collection. It has been pointed out that, quite naturally, once the banks have a guarantee from the government, they send one letter in an effort to collect, and if they receive no answer, they immediately turn to the government and say, "Pay up." That is understandable if you are in the banking business, but that does not mean that we should suddenly move now to change the program without the program evaluation that Senator Kinsella spoke about. Let us do the program evaluation, but let us not proceed to change the program without an evaluation.