

*Private Members' Business*

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However, on close scrutiny one has to conclude that there is no real distinction to be made between science education and any other kind of education in terms of what kinds of problems, policies, teaching techniques, curriculum and so on that need to be examined.

The Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology in its report *Canada Must Compete* proposed that there be a national council on education.

The government responded by pointing out that there was a great deal of work presently being done by the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada and posed the question whether a new national body such as a council is required in these circumstances. It would require careful consideration by all stakeholders. The merits of the proposition that I advance here have to some degree been recognized by the government and taken under advisement.

The difficulty with the Council of Ministers of Education is that this is an *ad hoc* arrangement among politicians that can get intertwined with all kinds of political and jurisdictional considerations. It is not the kind of body that is necessary in this country if we are to look at education within the context that virtually every other country has managed to do, especially those countries that do not have the jurisdiction divisions that Canada and the United States have.

We have to look for an approach to the question of a national council on education which will avoid the implication that the federal government is stepping on provincial jurisdictions. Rather, a body is needed that will provide the studies, recommendations and so on after carrying out or commissioning studies which will help the responsible bodies, whether these be provincial governments or even school-boards, in carrying out their responsibilities.

There is no paucity of issues to be looked at within the Canadian educational context. For example, the government has looked at a number of problems such as those I cited earlier which have been so widely reported, for example the deficiency of industrial trainees in this country, the high level of illiteracy and the high dropout rates in our schools.

The government suggested among other things that it would double the number of scientists, engineers and mathematicians that were produced in this country. It would eliminate illiteracy, quadruple the number of trainees and would increase the number of graduates coming from schools.

Those in fact are goals that are stated as a part of the prosperity initiative of this government and things that are being studied in these rather useless fora that constitute the prosperity initiative.

I have to say that all of us are extremely disappointed not to find any evidence of any of these initiatives or any other initiatives having to do with training and education such as those that it was suggested were government goals for action in the area of learning and education.

Should the government decide to do any of these things one of the questions that would have to be asked is: How is it going to do it? In which policy framework could this be done? How will we go about evaluating to what degree it has been accomplished after a period of time?

There is a good deal more that such a body could undertake including looking at the question of educational techniques. It is true that we have a very high dropout rate in this country. We should be asking why that is so. We should be asking questions about why so few of our students manage to enter into mathematics, engineering and science.

We should be asking whether the old teaching techniques still make sense. In spite of the fact that there has been a great deal of experimentation, particularly with students who are disadvantaged, with new information and teaching technologies, we are still burdened with the old-fashioned techniques that have been used since time immemorial.

It strikes me that one of the things that might be looked at is whether we are using our resources efficiently for students. We have had a change in the ethnic make up of our country. That is an issue that could be looked at.

There is the question of curriculum content, about which there has been little done in this country, while numerous studies have been done in this regard in the United States.