

*Education*

which have been devoting time and study to it. I know that hon. members have received many briefs on this subject, and are well aware of the thought that is being given to it in all parts of Canada.

Since the last debate on this subject on May 22, 1950, there have been two developments that I hope will have some significance in the view of the government. In addition to my reference to the unfortunate speech made by the Minister of Agriculture, I might also mention, in view of his presence in the house today, the rather surprising speech made by the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Martin) on the same date. Many of us who have known the minister for a long time, who have known the importance of the part played by education in his life and in his advancement, and have known also of the encouragement that he has given in time past to the provision of scholarships, regardless of province, regardless of particular area in this country, were most disappointed in the speech that the hon. gentleman made on that occasion. It was not a speech that commended itself to logic. It was not the kind of speech this house was entitled to expect from the hon. gentleman.

**Mr. Martin:** I am just reading it now, and it does not sound bad.

**Mr. Fleming:** If it still sounds not bad to the minister I suggest that the minister go right on reading because he could not have gone very far with the reading of his speech.

The first development of the two I referred to was the dominion-provincial conference, and the second was the rather important and, I hope, significant statement made by the Prime Minister on a recent occasion.

You will remember that when the Minister of National Health and Welfare made the disappointing speech to which I have just referred he sought in effect to invite the house to delay. He kept ringing the changes on the theme, "Of course, there is to be a dominion-provincial conference; just hold your horses, you who are supporting this urgent project, and we will talk about it at the dominion-provincial conference; anything said in the meantime on the subject must necessarily be premature." I should like to quote the essential words in the final and involved paragraph of the minister's speech, as reported on page 2729 of *Hansard* of May 22, 1950, as follows:

—and I would add . . . until we have had an opportunity first of sitting down and discussing these matters in detail with those jurisdictions of government which, under the constitution, have the exclusive responsibility in matters of education.

He indicated that it would be unwise to deal with these matters with any degree of

[Mr. Fleming.]

precision at that time. Let us take the minister at his word. Let us assume that there was some substance—I think we are being charitable if we do—in that pretext of the minister. There has been a dominion-provincial conference held in the meantime. As a matter of fact, a couple of such conferences have been held. Did the government put the minister in position to keep faith with the house in this matter? I am not quite sure. Let us hope that the government did make some serious effort to bring this subject before the dominion-provincial conference, and that this matter of mutual interest and high importance received there that joint consideration that the minister indicated in his view was required. In any event, that conference has been held and that pretext no longer justifies delay in this house passing opinion on this urgent matter.

The second development since May 22 last to which I think no little significance may well be attached, something to which the Minister of National Health and Welfare is bound to attach great significance, is the speech made by the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) at the autumn convocation of the university of Toronto on October 27, 1950, on the occasion of the conferring upon him of an honorary degree of doctor of laws. In the course of his very notable speech on that occasion the Prime Minister led up to this concluding statement:

The universities are, without question, among the most precious of our national institutions. Now I recognize, and I believe most Canadians recognize, the wisdom of the provision of our constitution which made education perhaps the most important of all those subjects entrusted to the provincial authorities. This provision was designed primarily to safeguard both of the two cultural traditions which we Canadians possess and which, year by year, we are coming to cherish more and more, as we realize how greatly they enrich our national life. The entrusting of education to the provincial authorities has the further advantage of providing a measure of insurance against too great a degree of uniformity in our educational systems. No one with any real respect for our history and tradition would wish to disturb that constitutional position.

May I interject at this point to say that I give to those words, as I am sure does every hon. member of this house, my full and unqualified support. The Prime Minister then went on to say:

At the same time, I think many of us recognize increasingly that some means must be found to ensure to our universities the financial capacity to perform the many services which are required in the interest of the whole nation. I hope you, Mr. Chancellor—

Let me interject here to explain to the house that the Prime Minister (Mr. St. Laurent) was addressing the chairman of the