

Canada Student Loans Act

it is a great contribution to society. The hon. member for Oshawa-Whitby (Mr. Broadbent) talked about the social advantages involved. Much of the unrest we see in our society is as a result of people living in poverty, not only economic but social and cultural poverty. If we had greater opportunities for education for all we would remove some of the lack of purpose many of these young people feel, and many of the needs that go along with it.

I will conclude, Mr. Speaker, by saying I welcome some of the changes that are being made to the Student Loans Act, but I think we have to go much further. The money is available in this country. All that is necessary is to set the proper priorities. The time to begin is now. Nothing will be gained by procrastinating, or conditions in general will continue to get worse.

Hon. W. G. Dinsdale (Brandon-Souris): Mr. Speaker, there is no need to speak at length on this measure. I intend to speak for only a few moments to indicate my continuing interest and also to urge the minister and the government to look far beyond the terms of reference of the bill now before us and to move forward to the next important step that is required in public assistance to Canadian students of university potential. I say this because the legislation that we have before us is merely housekeeping. It tidies up a bill that has been on the statute books since 1964. The minister in his outline of the amendments underscored this point. It regularizes procedures with respect to the position of students with landed-immigrant status. It changes the act to deal with the new approach to the university timetable, namely, the trend in universities toward the semester system as contrasted with the yearly system that has prevailed hitherto. It also changes the amount of a loan in line with the inflationary conditions in Canada and the rapidly increasing student population eligible for the student loans program.

I emphasize, Mr. Speaker, that this housekeeping approach to the problem of assistance to our rapidly increasing student population is not sufficient to meet the demands for skilled young Canadians with professional training to deal with the complexities of our modern twentieth century society. The student loans program was actually pioneered by the provincial governments. Most provincial governments had a student loans program operating before the federal government entered the field. The federal government entered the field because it was

[Mr. Nystrom.]

not within the financial resources of the provinces to provide the sums that were necessary to meet the upsurge in student interest.

I recall the discussions concerning these subjects in the latter 1950's and early 1960's. The federal government's substantial participation in the Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act was one of the strong motivating sources in stirring up federal government interest. It hardly seemed logical that the federal government would be providing substantial assistance to students at the technical and vocational level and ignoring completely the area of university training, wherein Canadians had the opportunity to become professionally qualified in order to meet the demands of the rapidly expanding Canadian economy as well as the expanding role of Canada in many other areas of human activity both domestic and international. It was entirely logical that the federal government should derive this inspiration from the provincial governments which had already pioneered in this field. I notice the minister did not give the provincial governments credit for being the first to enter this field.

The only other comment I wish to make on the matter on the administration of the present loans act is that the method of administration leaves much to be desired in terms of the allocation of limited loans to students on the basis of academic ability as well as on the basis of economic need. Only in the last year have I received increasing complaints from students who have been denied access to the loan fund because of what would appear to be arbitrary decision. As I have investigated each case that has come to my attention, the student has been eminently qualified in terms of academic ability. It seems that the elimination of these students from access to the loan fund is derived largely from the shortage of total funds available.

It may be that the increased amounts permitted under the amendments to the legislation will overcome the deficiency to this extent. However, I feel that the application of the needs test is on the basis of the old means test principle, which should have been discarded long ago. I think in all public programs of this kind which are administered at both the provincial and federal levels it has become the accepted procedure to speak in terms of actual need and not in terms of the total means available.

The cases which have come to my attention have involved families where the father had a total income of approximately \$10,000 per