

Mr. Corbin: I realize the hon. member said it, but I would like to endorse it.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Gander-Twillingate speaks like one of those tumultuous rivers in which salmon goes upstream—I must admit that I had an opportunity to fish for Atlantic salmon with him this summer, and this is a compliment I want to pay him. He certainly has the gift of gab and he speaks sometimes so fast, he runs like one of the those cascading streams that I have difficulties following him.

Anyway, it so happens that while I was consulting the library, I found some kind of minutes of the second Canadian conference on education held in Montreal in 1962 and to which my colleague from Ottawa-East (Mr. Gauthier) referred a little earlier.

I found it most interesting to learn that people have been talking about the necessity or usefulness of holding a national conference on education for a long time. I can quote this document, the title is: *Educational programs, Programmes d'éducation, 1962*. It was published by the Canadian Conference on Education. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture had specifically submitted the following opinion, which I quote in English:

● (1640)

[English]

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture recognizes that—

The constitutional prerogatives of the provinces in the field of education exist. Not only should they be respected but they are necessary to give essential flexibility and autonomy in educational policy to the people of the various provinces.

[Translation]

And it is for that specific reason, Mr. Speaker, that I have certain reservations.

And here I sort of go half way with my colleague.

[English]

Yet Canada is also a nation. In the opinion of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, Canada can, as a nation, properly strive to have national goals and standards that would represent a consensus on basic needs and would contribute to the strengthening of the nation as well as to improving its methods of educational financing and to achieving equality of educational opportunity for its citizens.

[Translation]

I think that in this resolution, emphasis has been placed on the need to develop general financing programs and on access to education rather than on interference in the formulation of programs and the setting of standards as such.

In this same publication, I also noted another resolution formulated by the Canadian Federation of Mayors and Municipalities, which reads as follows. I quote, in English:

[English]

Whereas the school is one of the foundations on which we build the structure of our democratic society—

Education

[Translation]

As for me, it is rather the family, but for the Canadian Federation, it is the school.

[English]

Whereas it is desirable that a high level of education be assured for every boy and girl throughout the nation; and

Whereas the limited field of revenue available to municipalities does not and cannot yield the funds required to meet existing as well as future responsibilities in the sphere of education; and

Whereas under the British North America Act education is a provincial and not a federal responsibility; and

Whereas it is imperative, therefore, that provincial governments be placed in a position whereby they will be able to contribute more substantially to the costs of primary and secondary education:

Therefore be it resolved that the Dominion and Provincial Governments be urged to consider ways and means whereby, through appropriate and mutually agreed upon financial arrangements, the provinces of Canada may more adequately support the local costs of education throughout the nation.

[Translation]

Of course, there have been many changes in our provincial education systems since that resolution was adopted by the second Canadian Conference on Education, but the fact remains and I think that it went to the heart of the problem. In fact, if the federal government gives the provinces the necessary funds to allow them to fulfil their responsibilities and their obligations in the field of education, I think they will quickly come to an agreement and this is the level at which an agreement must be made. We will then have reached the goals described by the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan).

I don't see myself at all as the premier of New Brunswick and I have no such aspirations, but let us suppose for a moment that I were, I would see in a very bad eye the federal government inviting me to a conference on that difficult question. My first reaction would be, as it would be for Newfoundland, Quebec, Ontario or British Columbia, to tell the federal government to get lost, to tell them: "This is none of your business, we have exclusive jurisdiction—"

[English]

Mr. Lundrigan: Leave Newfoundland out, we are broad-minded about it.

Mr. Corbin: All right; I will come back to certain statements you made earlier about the province of Quebec.

[Translation]

I think that the provinces would refuse to attend or be convened to such a meeting, unless the federal government specified that the only purpose of the conference were to define the means through which the national government could further contribute, but financially only, to the progress of education in Canada, at the level of each province.

They talk of norms—in English, we call them "standards". Of course, as the hon. member for Ottawa East (Mr. Gauthier) has stated earlier, standards vary greatly. This may be the drawback of a free system of education whose foundations are provincial, but this may be fortunate because each region of this country has its own characteristics, traditions and requirements, and education is given