

Private Members' Business

therefore their children do not learn the basic skills required to complete school”.

There is a child who is very fortunate that her parents had the income to pay for her education, to correct her disability and put her on her way so that she can be a productive Canadian.

• (1710)

This bill, if it is passed by this House, is inadequate because it will not come anywhere near meeting the needs of these types of individuals. That certainly is a job of provincial governments.

Certainly with the situation that the provinces are in with cutbacks in EPF funds and so on, there is an awful lot of pressure on governments simply to maintain the *status quo*, let alone expand in educational areas.

Although this aspect of education is largely provincial, the federal government, through the Income Tax Act, at least can provide some relief to these Canadians by making these costs tax deductible.

A tax deduction would seem eminently fair. People spending their hard earned income to better the lives of their children or someone around them are benefiting not only that child and that family, but this entire country.

We all talk about the need for better educated people in this country in order that this country can develop in the areas that we need if we are going to be a competitive nation in the world today.

To deny 10 per cent of the population—that is only those with learning disabilities and not counting those with other disabilities—the best possible opportunity to achieve their education and some intellectual standing is a shame.

Although we should be doing much more for education, this is the very least we can do. If most Canadians knew that at least 10 per cent of this country was being denied such an opportunity, there would be an outcry. Most Canadians would certainly agree that there should be some tax relief in this sort of situation.

I raise this bill today in the hopes that the government and members of this House can see fit to take a hold of this issue. Maybe this bill is not drafted in a form that is fully acceptable to the government. Let us make some changes to it. Maybe there should be different wording. Maybe there should be a different direction, but it would

be certainly a step to get a commitment from the government that it agrees that the direction in which this bill is going is the right one.

If it could commit itself to that, that would be the first step. If there is a need for some sort of revision or some changes, that is fine. If there can be some direction in another form, that is fine as well but there is a need. It is a crying need at a time when we, as a Parliament, address this most basic need for Canadians and for the future of this nation.

I close by calling on the government to open its heart. Let us do something for the children of this country. Let us do something to make life that much easier, to give them more potential and to provide an opportunity that is being denied to thousands of children across this country.

Unlike this little girl in Montreal who has had the opportunity, there are thousands who are being denied that opportunity. I would simply call upon this government to take some action to help these children.

Mr. Peter L. McCreath (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State (Finance and Privatization)): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the hon. member for Moose Jaw for bringing forth this concern. His intentions are of the highest order and I commend him for the concern that he has shown for Canadians with disabilities and for the cause of education in Canada.

I might say, however, in his remarks he indicates the education system really only targets to serve a certain group. I would with respect suggest to him it is the responsibility of provincial departments of education and school boards to serve every child within their jurisdiction. I would even go so far as to say if in fact they are not doing that they are perhaps in violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the rights of each Canadian child to be treated equally before the law.

There are a variety of programs available in Canadian schools responding to young people, children with disabilities, and they are getting better all the time. We have some very active lobby groups working on their behalf. I think of organizations like the Canadian Association for Community Living, for example. Their lobbies are targeted primarily at the provincial government. That is where they should be. This is where I have some concern with the bill, if not the sentiments of my hon. friend opposite. What we are dealing with here is something that falls clearly and unequivocally in an area of provincial jurisdiction.