

Proposed Adult Education Council

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we know that a very large percentage of our unemployed have little or no education. In former years a man could get by without very much education and perhaps even without a trade; but that time is past. I know of the case of a man who as a boy of 14 began to work for Canadian National Railways as a rodman. When he retired he was superintendent of the Atlantic region of Canadian National Railways. That kind of thing is very rarely happening now.

A year or two ago one of the finest tasks that has been discharged by the Senate was carried out by the committee of that place on manpower and employment. They produced a great many figures showing the ratio between unemployment and education. They showed, for example, that unemployment rates were high among those who had not finished primary school, as a matter of fact, twice as high as among those who had not attended high school and six times higher than the rate for high school graduates.

A few weeks ago a man came to see me about employment. After chatting with him for a little while I said, "All right, I should like to try to help you find work. How much education do you have?" He said, "I hesitate to admit it but I have none; I am illiterate". My next question was, "Have you any trade?" He said, "No, I have no trade; I am a labourer." What can any of us do for men like that?

As the sponsor of the resolution has said, for a long time adult education was concerned mainly with forums and matters of that nature, but adult education will have to branch out. As a teacher, it seems to me that for far too long we have stressed, and perhaps rightly so up to this point, that education was for living but not necessarily for making a living. All of us have to make a living. Communism and the other isms thrive on empty stomachs. It seems to me we have made a great many mistakes with respect to education. In the time of Dickens it was felt that if a child was chastised enough he would learn. If he did not memorize the two or three pages of Latin assigned to him each evening then the procedure was to whale the dickens out of him, if I may use a pun.

Then, of course, the trend changed and it seems to me that in the last quarter or half century the trend went too far the other way. We were trying to entertain our youngsters in school and trying to make school so pleasant for them. Education is for living as well as making a living, as I have said, and living is work. We must work. It is not all entertainment. I think that the trend is somewhat the other way now. For many years

the trend was to build large schools with great gymnasiums and any youngster who lived more than two or three hundred yards from the school was taken there in a bus. Then, they must run the little fellow around in a gymnasium to give him enough exercise. We should be getting away from that, we must because we are in a very changing world.

The sponsor of the resolution said that education is a provincial matter. This is very true. Education is a provincial matter and it ought to remain a provincial matter. Although I am opposed to centralization, in many cases, it seems to me that this is one field in which we might enter more fully on a federal basis, to co-ordinate all those agencies that are working in this field. I must say that I feel our school year for the children of this country is too short. I see no reason why school should not be conducted for at least 44 weeks a year. I suppose I would not be very popular if I were to say that in a school auditorium. In connection with that aspect I might say that a day or two ago I saw a cartoon in which two youngsters were depicted sliding during a terrific winter storm. One youngster said to the other, isn't it wonderful that it was too cold today to go to school? This is another failure we have. We are making it too easy for the children.

I should like to compliment the government, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Starr) and his officials upon their approach to technical education. I have had some dealings within the last year or two with the vocational branch of the Department of Labour. I am sure there is no finer branch of any department in the country. In closing, I should like to say that no matter what we may do in the field of education we must never forget the teachers. The teacher we have at the front of the classroom in any school, vocational, technical or any other field of education, is the most important factor in the whole educational system.

Mr. H. M. Batten (Humber-St. George's): I should like to take a few moments, Mr. Speaker, to make a few comments on this resolution. I should first like to commend the hon. member for Peterborough (Mr. Pitman) for introducing this resolution. I think it is a timely resolution and one that needs debating in a national forum of this type. He explained his purpose in introducing the resolution and went on to say that education in this country is the responsibility of the provinces. I would hope that any program looking toward adult education would also be provincial in its scope and would be under the departments of education of the different provinces.