

*Proposed Federal Office of Education*

interested in the growth and development of the schools of the nation, the major responsibility for the organization and financing of schools has been a state's function. In many instances the education system has become so decentralized that each school district has assumed major responsibility for the development of its schools. We have valued this decentralization, believing that it is important for every citizen in every community to be interested in the kind of schools his children attend. We have voted to tax ourselves at the state and local levels to maintain a high-level educational system and have been proud of the dedication shown by the lay boards of education who have given unselfishly that our American system might reach the level of its present accomplishments. Yet, at the same time we have been consciously aware of the fact that, with increased mobility of our nation's population and increased need for an enlightened citizenry, the federal government must play an increasing role in the further development of our educational opportunities.

I believe those words apply with equal force in Canada. We must recognize and respect the primacy of provincial jurisdiction in education. If Canadian education is to be effective, provincial education departments and powers must be strong. The alternative to that is surely an educational lag and a default of leadership, but the government should help, where help is wanted, by grants, information and advice. The federal government has a valid and vital interest of its own in education, a national interest in education.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in its statement of policy for 1965-66, published last September, states at page 16 of that document:

While recognizing that educational institutions and their administration in Canada are under the specific jurisdiction of the provincial and local authorities, it is nevertheless ascertained that education is and ought to be a matter of national concern and of direct interest to all Canadians.

The hon. member for Burnaby-Richmond (Mr. Prittie) mentioned that parliament is now responsible for spending vast sums on education. I believe he mentioned an amount of some \$250 million. However, according to Pierre O'Neil in *La Presse*, some \$500 million is estimated to be the current federal expenditure on education.

Can the Canadian government or the provincial governments seriously talk of exclusivity in educational jurisdiction when education today involves this kind of public investment, this kind of involvement in every fibre of our society, our economy and our cultures? There is more than money at stake.

I believe that a federal office of education should co-ordinate the myriad federal programs in education, which the hon. member

[Mr. Stanbury.]

has mentioned. I believe it should make its facilities available to assist provinces to gather information and make it available for the advancement of education in all parts of Canada.

We must recognize that there is a national interest to be served in education which is not necessarily the sum of provincial interests or identical with any particular provincial interest. The Economic Council of Canada has made the message loud and clear that there is unquestionably a national interest in education from an economic standpoint. Perhaps, in fact, there is no more vital national interest.

The second annual review of the Economic Council of Canada points out that "education is a crucially important factor contributing to economic growth and to rising living standards". That would be reason enough to co-ordinate our attacks on this national problem, but there is more to education than economics. There are people, their lives and livelihoods, their contributions in human terms to their families, their communities and their country.

What should be our goals as a nation to meet their needs in education? What needs have the provinces been unable to meet, or cannot be expected to meet? I can think of a number of areas in which federal initiative could be taken in an office of education such as the motion suggests—pre-school preparation of economically and culturally deprived children, children of minority groups, children of immigrants; orientation of immigrants of all ages to school, to work, to our society; highly qualified in their own countries but restricted by educational or professional requirements here; training of language teachers to raise the level of bilingualism wherever local education authorities want to do so in any part of Canada; training and retraining Canadians of any age, wherever they live, so that they may make the fullest use of their talents for the benefit of themselves and of Canada; adult education which recognizes education as a continuous process, continuously enriching lives, communities, provinces, and most of all our country. Mobility of teachers and students, of knowledge and ideas, as well as of labour is surely desirable in Canada.

• (5:30 p.m.)

A nation's education cannot live and thrive in ten airtight compartments. It will suffocate in the grip of parochialism. It is suffocating, at least in so far as the national interest