

*Established Programs Financing*

ticipation, if we are going to do anything which in any way discourages people from seeking the opportunity for acquiring post-secondary education, whether it be in universities or applied colleges or whatever the case may be, then we are destroying initiative and losing something which is invaluable.

I have always felt, Mr. Speaker, that education, whether it be at the elementary, secondary or post-secondary level, is an investment. The state facilitates this investment by providing the necessary resources, but it is an investment which bears a return in the years to come. Investing money in post-secondary education is very different from providing short-term, make-work jobs. Tragically, those short-term, make-work jobs end within six weeks or whatever the case may be. So often we take someone who was unemployed and give him the opportunity to work for a short period of time and then turn him back out on the street in the same condition as that in which he or she came. But we have done nothing for that individual in the long term.

I have always believed, and I continue to hope, Mr. Speaker, that when we invest our financial resources in education, we are permitting people to help themselves. We are permitting such individuals to become useful, satisfied, contributing and self-supporting members of our society and economy. I have one or two examples specifically in mind, Mr. Speaker, from my recent years of teaching. I am referring particularly to women who have been coming back into the post-secondary educational field in greater numbers in recent years. There are many such people, but the two I think of at the moment were single parents who found, with their new responsibilities as single parents that they did not have the earning power to raise their children in a way satisfying to them. One such person was in fact on social assistance when she came to university. I have always complimented the people responsible for the system for making it possible for her to come to university.

I know there are many other individuals similar to these two, but what struck me was that they were extremely determined to accept their responsibilities as single parents and wished very much to become self-supporting and contributing members of society. Fortunately they went back to university prior to the present crisis, and both are now taxpaying, contributing members of our society. One of them has virtually completed her parental responsibilities in that her offspring have reached the age of maturity. But they have gone into fields where they as individuals have made an excellent contribution. Perhaps they have made even an extraordinary contribution because of their own particular personal life history.

It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that we as a society have a responsibility, including those of us who have played any part in our universities, to enable such people to go to university. It would be a tragedy if we were to do anything which closed the door to such people.

I think we are well known at Brandon University for three things, Mr. Speaker. One is the Faculty of Music, which is recognized throughout the country for its excellence. Secondly, we are well known for our mature student program which was developed a number of years ago. One of the characteristics of

that program was that students who have not, for a variety of reasons, completed their traditional secondary education were enabled at the age of 21 or more to come into university and attempt to fulfil the requirements for their degree, even though they did not have the normal Grade 12 qualifications. I remember very distinctly the first man who came to the university when I was registrar. He had been a very successful businessman in his community. He came to university as a mature student, very anxious for the opportunity to attend before his eldest daughter, who was at that stage in Grade 12. Tragically, that man died a while ago, but prior to his death he had the satisfaction of completing a university degree, having achieved a lifetime ambition. He gave up a great deal to do that. His business had been extremely successful. He returned at considerable sacrifice to himself and his family, but I think it was a satisfying experience for him, and it would have been very tragic had this experience been in any way denied to him.

● (1550)

There are many other mature students who, for a variety of reasons, were not able to, or chose not to, complete their secondary education in the traditional manner. In recent years we have been able to bring them back into the university fold, and in most instances they have made an excellent contribution. We must do nothing to discourage this re-education process. In fact, Mr. Speaker, all the evidence indicates that all young people today, regardless of the field into which they enter, will in all likelihood have to be retrained once, and perhaps twice, during the course of their lifetime.

When I think of this topic I also think of the large number of Indian and Métis students who have returned to university in recent years. Brandon University has led the way in this particular endeavour. In many cases, but not all, these students came back to university without being able to fulfil the traditional requirements for admission. In many cases this is because of the lack of formal education prior to their return to university, or because of the inequity in the schools from which they came. I know that inequity well, Mr. Speaker. I took grades eight, nine and ten in a one room country school by correspondence. While there are some things to be learned from that experience, there are many, many disadvantages.

People who come to university from this particular disadvantaged position, particularly Indian and Métis students, have required extra support to bridge the gap between the position from which they came and the one in which they now find themselves. In our experience, Mr. Speaker, bridging that gap has been a fairly costly endeavour. We are very pleased with the results of it. For example, it was at one time the case in the Province of Manitoba that a teacher was inevitably white, including the northern communities where the pupils were entirely non-white. I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that in the Province of Manitoba today, in many of those classrooms in the north and elsewhere, the teacher is now of the same origin as the students whom he or she is teaching. This was made possible by programs started by both of the previous Governments in the Province of Manitoba and supported by both. This has been a step forward. Universities have been