

*Canada Student Loans Act*

and earn the tuition fees and others, either because of family backgrounds or early marriages, do not have the opportunity of obtaining the tuition fees. The price of education has gone up in common with the price of housing, clothing and almost everything else.

I should like to emphasize one more point. Making higher education universally accessible means more than just removing the financial barriers to education. We must also remove many of the social, psychological and even structural barriers if most of our young people are to have the chance of going to university. Our so-called lower class people live on inadequate incomes. Many of them live in poverty and in homes where unemployment is rife. Such people have social values that are different from those of the middle class of this country or of similar people in the United States. They do not have the same values, the same confidence in education as their cousins from wealthier backgrounds, or the same motivation to learn. Also, you will find that the children coming from the poorer homes of Canada may not be as healthy physically as many of the children coming from the better-off families. All these factors must be taken into account if one wants to make higher education universally accessible to people of all income levels.

I think it is also true to say that our educational system, and especially our higher educational system, discriminates against children coming from the poorer backgrounds of this country. In support of that contention may I quote what Dr. John Porter had to say. I quote:

Systems of early selection always favour children from the middle and upper social classes. There are no true culture-free techniques of selection. Lower class children live in environments which are restrictive of their intellectual development. Middle class children are exposed at an earlier age and in greater intensity to a range of cultural items which have become important in the measuring of intelligence and aptitudes. Their parents, moreover, have a better knowledge of the system and can prepare them for it. Middle class parents can turn failure in being selected into success by dealing with teachers and school administrators as social equals or superiors rather than social inferiors which is very frequently the experience of the lower class parent. Some lower and working class children are able to compete in this selection system, but they tend to be the exceptionally able.

I think this point is valid and is borne out when one looks at what is happening in the underprivileged areas of the country. Even the curriculum in our classrooms, which is designed by middle-class Canadians and is

oriented towards children coming from middle-class backgrounds, is an example in point. Look at what happens in grade 1. The grade 1 story of Dick and Jane is essentially a story involving a middle-class background. The characters display middle-class attitudes and values which are not always relevant to those coming from poorer families. The stories seldom deal with poverty stricken backgrounds, and always have characters that are white. Children coming from the poor and rural background of the country see little that is relevant in such stories. They live in different worlds. Also, the atmosphere of the classroom alone is another barrier to the progress of lower class students because it is alien and, to them, unreal.

I have touched on some of the factors contributing to the inequities in our educational system today. We must take them all into consideration if we wish to solve the problems confronting us. Student loans go only halfway; they are, so to speak, a halfway house and to that extent they are good. May I emphasize, in summary, that the goal of universally accessible higher education is most desirable. I submit that every person, regardless of colour, economic background or social or ethnic origin, should have an equal opportunity to be educated. Only then will you have a just society.

● (4:50 p.m.)

This means the removal of financial, social and structural barriers that many of these young people are facing long before they reach university age. It is also very desirable to have universal accessibility for society as a whole. Many economists say we are losing millions of dollars a year because students are dropping out of school. At this point I would like to quote from a speech made by the late Robert Winters when he was president of Brazilian Light and Power. This speech was made last year in Windsor, Ontario, on the subject of education. He said:

To bring such facilities and faculties to all who have the wish and the ability to use them is a financial undertaking of the first magnitude. It requires the resources of all levels of government and the private sector.

That is, the private sector of our economy. He went on to say:

The level of education and the standard of national economic well-being are inter-related. In our case, it is the major reason for the shortfall in our economic performance compared with our better educated neighbours to the south.

This, Mr. Speaker, is a very relevant fact and should be taken into consideration. Also,