

Education

● (1630)

I believe that this leads to a situation where, by giving everyone a great deal of education, you have on the one hand either woolly-headed theorists or, in the words of the poet Alexander Pope, bookfilled blockheads—and I suggest we have enough of those in Canada in all fields—or, on the other hand, by giving formal education to grade 12 or 13 you have an army of young people who are educated to become frustrated and bored.

The emphasis lately has been on doing your own thing. It is done in the name of the highest endeavour. It is said there must be development to the full potential, and so on. But this often means having people almost literally playing tiddleywinks or doing whatever interests them. As a result of being forced to receive education, and because it is socially the right thing to do, the whole process has been watered down. Now it is not so much a case of students doing their own thing; the teachers are doing their own thing as well, with the result that standards are lost without there being any formalized examinations.

However, I am still very much in favour of the motion because it presents a tremendous opportunity for the federal government to become involved, in co-operation with the provinces, in such fields as giving financial aid to education in the context of work and performance, education for small businessmen, and such things as that. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce in Quebec has become involved in this as a private venture, and it is one that could engage the federal government. For the small businessman who may have been a failure in mathematics at school there is now the opportunity to really learn what profit and loss is all about. I am sure we have all experienced meeting someone who has been an utter failure in mathematics until he decides to become an airline pilot, and suddenly overnight he is genius at mathematics. We should view this question in the context of education for tomorrow.

Through the Opportunities for Youth program the federal government could also involve itself in the encouragement of young people, who have ambition and the desire to get out of the four walls concept and into productive activity, to learn on the job. If they set up a business they could learn public relations, accountancy, advertising and about everything relating to that business.

I recognize that in the sciences it is mandatory that an opportunity be made available to attend university. For those who wish to pursue scientific activities, as well as those who have the interest and the imagination to pursue social fields or the world of literature, university is essential. But we do a disservice to the young people of Canada by trying to force them to enter what they feel is an alien atmosphere, this business of four walls. Something must be done about this and I think what should be done is what my colleague for Gander-Twillingate suggested, which is to get together with the provinces, admit that the situation has not been very good, and find out how the federal government might help finance whatever endeavours result from such a conference.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Eymard Corbin (Madawaska-Victoria): Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time, on a Friday afternoon, that I

[Mr. Arrol.]

prepared notes expecting to take part in a debate during the private members' hour, but in any case, I rarely have the opportunity to speak. In any event, I have not had much time to prepare for this debate which greatly interests me, and that, for various reasons that I shall spell out in a moment.

The notice of motion introduced by the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan)—as the hon. member carefully explained himself—tends, no more or less, to ask the government to reflect on and consider the advisability of calling a national conference on education and human resources. Obviously, the motive is most commendable and valuable. There is no question about that. However, as regards the purpose of the motion the holding of another national conference, I suggest that, to say the least, I have some doubts on this matter because we hold so many national, federal-provincial or constitutional conferences which yield such disappointing results today that I have become somewhat sceptical as to their real value. Of course, time and patience conquer all things, but in this case I would say that I have reservations and the hon. member—I recognize that he is extremely well-meaning—has not quite convinced me of the need or urgency to call such a conference.

The debate may be opened with the *prima facie* recognition that the provinces have the first and last say in the field of education and there, Mr. Speaker, is the end of the debate, strictly speaking.

The hon. member has drafted his motion in broad enough terms for us to be able to talk of the many aspects of education at the national, provincial or strictly regional level, that is at the level of school districts, for instance.

The provinces have obviously had an acquired right for the past 105 years now, an exclusive jurisdiction over the field of education but, through some fortunate shifting, subsidies, special programs established most of the time, if not always, with the blessing of provincial authorities, the federal government has progressively infiltrated this exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces over education.

In addition to that exclusive jurisdiction enshrined in the Constitution of Canada, there is a traditionally recognized academic freedom not only at the university level but also at the school level in the sense that every province is free to prescribe the courses, the programs, the books it considers likely to further the education of students.

Of course, underlying any social structure is the family responsibility. And the Thomist philosophy I studied when I was in college recognizes that the family, the basic cell of society, has the prime responsibility in the field of education. So we must go back to the roots.

We are now faced with dreadful situations. National bodies dictate national standards and want to impose general standards upon the whole of the Canadian people. And this type of system tends not to solve problems but create dreadful situations. I might have time to further elaborate on that before I conclude my remarks.

The fact is that the subject brought forward by the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan)—

[*English*]

Mr. Lundrigan: I said that.