

Canada Student Loans Act

have been told that this matter was a subject of discussion. I hope the government gives consideration to the suggestion that we eliminate, through an amendment or by the application of this legislation, that restrictiveness inherent in the definition of a student.

Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I am very very happy to follow the hon. member for Gander-Twilligate (Mr. Lundrigan) and I support the appeal he has just made. In fact, the appeal I wish to make is in the same vein, though I shall demonstrate it by reference to a particular case.

• (4:40 p.m.)

I realize that on third reading it is difficult to amend a bill which is going through the House. It is even more difficult to amend something that in fact is in the act itself. In this case it may be that no such amendment to the legislation is necessary. Indeed, perhaps what we should do is to make our point to the government with sufficient merit and weight that the government will change the regulations under the legislation. On November 25, 1969, Mr. Gordon MacDonell, Superintendent of Secondary Schools of Winnipeg, wrote the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) concerning this legislation, the Canada Student Loans Act. Mr. MacDonell's particular point related to the Winnipeg adult education centre. This is a very useful and valuable operation which has been going on for a few years. It happens to be located in my constituency. This is a centre to which adults can go when they realize they did not receive all the education they might have when attending school and wish to go back and perchance complete their matriculation or, in any case, receive supplementary education which would better fit them for life.

It would seem to me that the motives of such people deserve support and that when they require financial assistance that assistance should be forthcoming. Despite the appeal made in Mr. MacDonell's letter of November 25, to which I have referred, the Minister of Finance replied in the negative, although the letter is a page and a half long, on December 29, 1969. The argument used is that the legislation is for people who are in post-secondary institutions and that definitions have been worked out which do not include this kind of program, namely mature people, adults, who go back to complete what would amount to their high school education.

Like the hon. member for Gander-Twilligate (Mr. Lundrigan) and the hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Rose) who spoke a moment ago, if we are to assist people in obtaining an education—a proposition which surely all of us support—I believe here is a group of people who deserve not only our moral but also our financial support. I regret very much the government has not seen fit to meet the request presented to it by the Superintendent of Secondary Schools for the city of Winnipeg.

I may say parenthetically, and I confess I say it with a bit of pride, that some of these people who were anxious that this should be done under the Canada Student Loans plan made their request to the government of Manitoba and the very fine new government we now have in that province—

An hon. Member: Hear, hear.

Mr. Dinsdale: That was not me.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The last government in Manitoba was a good one, too. This one just seems to be a little better.

Mr. Dinsdale: We all learn by experience.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The government of Manitoba, at least on a temporary basis, has made a provision the effect of which is that these people are obtaining loans. We applaud the Manitoba government for what it is doing. I am sure everyone will join in that applause. But I submit this ought to be done on a federal basis. The same principles which inspired this legislation should carry through all the way.

When I first took the floor, the reason I said it may not be necessary to amend this legislation is to be found in the fact that in the letter the Minister of Finance wrote to Mr. MacDonell on December 29 there is a paragraph concerning how these definitions were arrived at. It appears they were achieved by consultations among the provinces and that there really is no barrier in the legislation itself to the defining of an adult education centre as the kind of body that could qualify under this legislation. At least, there is no barrier if the provinces can agree. I am not even sure from the wording of the letter of the Minister of Finance that that agreement must come from all the provinces. Therefore, it would seem to me that this matter might be looked into again. That was my purpose in rising to support those who have made this kind of appeal.