

Hon. Noël A. Kinsella: Honourable senators, I would like to speak to you about the amendment and the main motion, if I may. I will only take a few moments.

• (1750)

Having participated in some of the hearings of the National Finance committee, I was immensely impressed with the testimony that we heard both from the Canadian Federation of Students and also from officials from the Department of the Secretary of State. We have heard some important points today. The model upon which the current Canada Student Loans Program is based, which was designed back in the early sixties, astonishingly has never been examined.

We put the question to the director of the Student Aid Program, Miss Meloshe: "When was the last time the Student Aid Program was subject to a program evaluation?" We were astonished to learn that it had never been subjected to a proper program evaluation. It was astonishing to learn that a program of that importance, and framed in the world of the mid-sixties, had gone on for so long. Given the complexity that Senators Perrault and Stewart have alluded to involving all the jurisdictions and the relations between universities, the students and the banks, it is surprising that we have not sat down to ask whether that model or that program is achieving the objectives that it was originally set out to achieve, which is the whole purpose of a program evaluation.

Honourable senators are all aware that Canada contributes an enormous amount of money to higher education in this country, and that we rank favourably with other countries around the world in terms of the per capita contribution. Canadians certainly have a right to see that we are getting the full benefit of that investment, as do the students.

One cannot help but be impressed by the debt that so many students are carrying with them upon graduation. Not too many of us would like to be starting out in life with a \$10,000 or \$12,000 debt. That is one of the results of the model that we have. The question that has to be put is: Are there other and better ways in which we can be funding higher education through the Student Assistance Program, either directly or indirectly, whether or not this program is the best program?

I was pleased to hear from testimony that that program will be subjected to a program evaluation, and that the amendment that has been proposed does not deal with that. Bill C-76 is an appeal — that is, in those sections dealing with the Canada Student Loans Program — to the student community to contribute, as every other Canadian is being asked to contribute, to the challenges that the national debt presents to every Canadian. I am confident that students across this land are quite willing to be contributors to that national challenge and are quite willing to put their shoulders to the common wheel of the nation.

Senator Frith: You certainly have a low confidence threshold.

Senator Perrault: The honourable senator expressed his great concern for the situation of the students, and they are going through a difficult time.

The Hon. the Speaker: Senator Perrault, if you speak now, it will have the affect of closing the debate on the amendment.

Senator Perrault: I would not stand in the way of any other senator wishing to speak.

Senator Corbin: That rule does not apply in this case.

Hon. M. Lorne Bonnell: Honourable senators, I want to say a few words on the amendment, and then perhaps later on I will say a few words concerning the original bill.

Senator Murray: You will have to wait until tomorrow. We now have Royal Assent.

Senator Bonnell: I would be prepared to adjourn the debate for the government, so that we could have Royal Assent.

Senator Murray: If you wish.

Senator Bonnell: I move the adjournment of the debate.

Senator Murray: No, it has not been called yet.

Senator Bonnell: I am prepared to move the adjournment of the debate, or else I propose to make this speech on the amendment and to make another speech again on the bill itself.

Senator Murray: Go ahead.

Senator Austin: Senator Murray says, "Go ahead."

Senator Bonnell: Does he run the whole show?

Senator Petten: Make up his mind!

Senator Simard: Why do you not deal with the amendments, then?

Senator Bonnell: I was about to do that.

Senator Simard: Go ahead; you have ten minutes.

An Hon. Senator: First things first!

The Hon. the Speaker: Honourable senators, the Senate will now adjourn during pleasure to await the arrival of the Honourable Deputy of His Excellency the Governor General.