

course. I simply want the authorities to come together and realize that people are moving across this country, and that the credits given by one province should be recognized in another province. This is all I am asking, Mr. Speaker.

[Translation]

I therefore trust, Mr. Speaker, that hon. members will understand my objections and the purpose of this motion.

[English]

Therefore I hope that hon. members who participate in this debate will recognize the spirit in which I am moving this motion. I am not seeking a uniform standard in the sense that the same courses should be offered in all provinces, but simply to have the credits given by each individual province recognized by all the other provinces so that our young people will not lose their credits when they move from one province to another.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for South Western Nova (Mr. Comeau) is to be congratulated on his perseverance in bringing this matter before the House today because the uniformity of education at approximate levels across the country is a matter of great concern. The constitutional committee has been travelling across the country recently, and I understand there is hardly any matter which comes up more frequently at its hearings than the uniformity of educational standards across Canada.

Section 93 of the British North America Act sets out that education is a provincial responsibility. I am sure that when the Fathers of Confederation sat down to draft that document in the years immediately preceding 1867 they thought of education in terms of small red brick buildings along concession roads throughout rural Ontario and the other provinces which were to become Canada. In this day of computers, modern technology and rapid transit, education has become an all-encompassing part of our way of life. We are involved in education from the age of three or four years right up to adulthood. If we were drafting a new BNA Act today, it seems to me it would be a far different document from the old one. I believe that most Canadians, if they had a chance to vote in a plebiscite, would opt for education being a federal matter so that people moving from one province to another would be able to move freely, without their children having to move back a grade in school or having to wait for a year while the students in their new class caught up with them.

Many representations have been made to the Constitutional Committee, and I am sure the hon. member for South Western Nova has received similar pleas, by people who believe that our educational standards should be more unified. Senator Cameron, who is an outstanding educator in our country, particularly experienced in the adult level of education, has often advocated the establishment of a national office of education which would be a sort of clearing house for the provincial departments across the country. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that this would be a very valid start on providing a more uniform system throughout the country.

National Education Standards

Even though the federal government has no responsibility for education it is deeply involved in education, not only at the adult level through the Canada Manpower programs but even at the post-secondary level. Recently, Mr. Speaker, I placed a question on the order paper asking how much was spent by the federal government on the various universities throughout Ontario, and the reply listed the grants made to these institutions. It pointed out that grants were made through three programs, the first being health resources fund which assists the province towards the capital cost of health training facilities at various universities. The second program is the Medical Research Council grants, and the third is welfare grants, both of which consist of funds for a combination of capital and operating expenses, and are given to individual investigators rather than to universities.

The total for Carleton University for the last five years was given as \$170,377. Another example is the University of Toronto which received \$32,879,745 over the past five years. The list totals upwards of \$50 million in this area of health grants alone for post-secondary education. As I say, the hon. member is to be congratulated for bringing this motion before the House. Certainly, within our provincial boundaries we have trouble maintaining the same quality and level of education. Before I became a Member of Parliament, I had considerable experience in establishing district school boards which would provide an equivalent standard throughout a small area. When this project is moved to the national scene in an attempt to provide equivalent standards across the whole country, it poses some problems but this does not mean we should not strive toward this end. Perhaps a national conference would be the first step.

• (5:20 p.m.)

In the area where I was active on the school board, for instance, there were very few kindergartens. When the new district board was established, which combined ten small township boards, then we had kindergartens throughout the area. This was a rural area where it was difficult to provide transportation and busing. It seems to me when larger units of administration are established the level throughout the district tends to rise to the top level, so perhaps this would be the case throughout Canada. If we were to have national levels and a grant system to support this, I am sure we would find that the level of education would move upwards in the provinces from the lower standards toward the highest standards which exist in the country.

Surely, education and training combined are the most important factors in the standard of living of any country. We used to believe that national resources or capital were the key to providing a high standard of living, but I am not sure that this is the case today. We know of countries which are very rich in natural resources, but which have a very low level of education and usually their standard of living is low. In other countries with large amounts of capital, if the education level is low then the standard of living tends to be low.