

Canada Student Loans Act

much more responsibility for the development of human resources than it has done in the last 100 years.

It is a fact, documented by economists and others who are not professional educators, that there is a great statistical correlation between government investment in the field of education and higher economic benefits. In other words, a country that is capable of investing in the field of education as a matter of fact enjoys greater resources in the economic field. Some people who are not in favour of investing more in the field of higher education argue that it is the economic situation which creates this investment rather than that education itself creates the investment. I hope I am not confusing the minister or the Minister without Portfolio in this regard.

An hon. Member: You are doing very well.

Mr. Lundrigan: Let me commend the hon. member for Fraser Valley West (Mr. Rose) for his remarks. I know of his educational background and I suggest that hon. members should listen carefully to some of his recommendations.

It has been suggested that there are few opportunities today for Canadian students. Again, a main reason for the increase in the number of student loans is the fact that a great many more people are desirous of obtaining a university education. This is a favourable situation. My main aim, however, is to lend my support to the suggestion made by the capable chairman of our caucus committee, and other members, regarding the restriction being placed on students eligible for loans, in that they must be full-time students.

The Government of Canada has recognized that the provinces have to be given more flexibility in the determination of who should receive a loan. Under clause 10, the provinces are given the authority to determine the scholastic standing, the academic achievement, the need and the amount of money up to \$1,000 in respect of students. I suggest that this government should also permit the provinces to determine what constitutes a student rather than limiting this definition by the words "a full-time student", who must be in attendance during not less than one semester. This limitation is to be found in clause 1, subclause (3), paragraph (i). I am not a lawyer but I think that is the part. I cannot understand the need for this restriction or inflexibility.

[Mr. Lundrigan.]

First of all, the use of the word "semester" in a chancy thing because there are about 25 different definitions in various universities across the country. But on the main point, why should the student be a "full-time student"? In many areas, where salaries are low, teachers are without full qualifications and receive small wages, these people must obtain their education by attending evening classes or summer schools. They are not able to enrol as full-time students at universities.

Many thousands of teachers across Canada are not able to attend universities full time because they are married and have families which they must support. Perhaps they got their education some 20 years ago. They cannot now afford to attend university full-time in order to obtain a degree and that expertise of many hon. members of this House, or others who consider themselves experts. They are not experts. They are just ordinary "Joes" who have only a few years of university education. They are qualified to teach under provincial statutes. Many of them have given up the teaching profession because they are not qualified to demand the higher salaries. And now they are not entitled to these student loans, although in my opinion they are professionals. These people should be permitted to obtain the maximum loan at the reduced rate of interest. They are, in many instances, more eligible than some of the greenhorns and rookies who are going to universities but cannot now qualify as teachers. Many of this latter group are likely to be dropouts.

The people who enrol in summer schools and evening courses are usually those who cannot afford to take full time programs at universities. They are unable to return to university without the advantages offered under this measure. I know of many people who have been financed from the pockets of their friends in order that they could return to school. Many of them have large families. These are the people who should be given the benefit of this measure. Many others like them are not able to finance their educational requirements and as a result remain in lesser positions with low salaries. I suggest they are being discriminated against as a result of the restriction in this measure, consequently they cannot upgrade their positions.

It is extremely vital that we do everything possible to assure these individuals an opportunity to increase their education. This point was raised during the committee hearings. I was not a member of that committee, but I