

Canada Student Loans Act

political problems. The Canada Year Book shows that in the year 1964 83 per cent of the students in P.E.I. participated in the Canada Student loans fund. Those to my left may say that if tuition fees were free there would not be many more students in P.E.I. to cover, but I take Prince Edward Island as an example because it does not have a large white-collar class and if a student is deserving he can qualify for aid.

Newfoundland, which also is not renowned for its established professional elite or for affluence, had 59 per cent of its students participating in this plan in the calendar year 1964. In Nova Scotia 47 per cent of the student enrolment participated, over 3,700 out of a total enrolment of 7,700-odd. New Brunswick, which also is not renowned for its elite, professional, vested interest class, had 57 per cent of its students participating.

On the other hand, Ontario, which has much more wealth than many parts of the east, had 45 per cent of its students participating, some 20,000 out of an enrolment of 44,000. In Manitoba the figure was 38 per cent. Saskatchewan, regardless of the tremendous boom given to its economy by the Conservative government by the wheat sales to China, is also not renowned for its professional elite, and 61 per cent of its students participated. In Alberta the figure was 57 per cent and in B.C., one of the richer provinces, 41 per cent participated in the student loans fund.

These figures do more than any verbal dialogue or monologue to indicate that the plan, while it may not go far enough, certainly has been a boon and an aid to deserving students who wish to further their education. In our economy and society there is pressure today to increase and expand the base. There is pressure to eliminate tuition fees but there are other priorities which come first. There are qualifications which a student who aspires to higher education should meet. With student aid, scholarships and bursaries, all deserving students can get that higher education which is so necessary in our modern-day society.

Though in general and in principle there can be no complaint with the student loans fund, administratively there have been some problems but to a large degree they have been ironed out. Initially the processing of applications was very slow. This caused difficulty but over the two year trial period that difficulty has been eliminated to a large degree.

[Mr. Nowlan.]

The six months interest free period after graduation is pretty short. I suggest a small amendment to the administrative provisions of the act whereby the interest free period would be extended, thus providing more time to a graduate to get established either matrimonially or in business before starting to repay the loan with interest.

As I say, though not related directly, there are certain features in the student loans bill which correspond to medicare and the medical resources resolution. The government has stated clearly that regardless of provincial objection it is going to introduce medicare. Toward that end it has introduced the health resources fund. I say the government is putting the cart before the horse in many ways. The student loans legislation is running into the same problem. It is providing money to aid students to go to university but because of the tight money policy enforced by the Minister of Finance, especially as it is applied to the maritime provinces, there are universities which have not been able to get loans from the banks in order to expand.

This problem is going to grow greater unless the minister and the government in the very near future start to apply fiscal policies on the basis of regions rather than giving a blanket, castor oil treatment to the whole country.

Mr. Stewart: Would the hon. member permit a question?

Mr. Nowlan: I will permit it but I do not know if I can answer it.

● (4:40 p.m.)

Mr. Stewart: I should like to ask the hon. member to explain to the house just what mechanism he would use to apply a monetary policy to one region of the country rather than to the country as a whole?

Mr. Nowlan: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that if I, like the hon. member who asked the question, were sitting on the government benches with the responsibility of the Minister of Finance and the advice available to him, I could devise some policy which could be applied on a regional basis with fiscal preferences in order to stimulate the economy and would do more good than a general application of the castor oil treatment. Everyone knows that you cannot give the same dose of castor oil to ten different babies and that the province of Nova Scotia is pretty close to being the financial and economic baby of this country. You cannot stimulate by giving a