

*The Address—Mr. Low*

of those districts where production is usually low and incomes therefore small should not have lesser opportunities to become good and useful citizens because of lack of education and training. We must realize the need for some equalization of opportunities. We must also recognize the danger of continuing to take seventy per cent or more of the cost of education out of taxes imposed upon the farms and homes of the people.

We cannot possibly achieve equality of educational opportunity across Canada without definite and substantial federal aid. I could talk for some time about the teacher situation and the need for higher salaries to attract and hold the best teaching material. I could talk at length about the need for higher qualifications on the part of teachers and for better equipment in the schools; but of course the government would probably accuse me of advocating the spending of moneys from the federal treasury while at the same time seeking tax reductions. With the high cost of defence during these uncertain and fearful times, with fixed government costs running at the highest level in our whole history, I know that the government is going to find it exceedingly difficult to balance its budget. But I charge that the government has failed to do anything like what it is perfectly possible to do, or to use its imagination. Otherwise it would easily have seen that aids to education could have been provided this year without in any way impairing the financial or economic soundness of our country.

One of the most pressing educational needs of this day is for proper school plants and capital equipment. There are, unfortunately, still many hundreds of school districts and divisions in Canada that are forced to carry on with obsolete and rundown buildings and equipment utterly unfit to be used for the purpose of education. There was a time when school district debentures were considered to be a good investment and they were rated amongst trustee securities, but in a great many areas in Canada they are no longer considered to be trustee securities. Most of the school districts therefore must finance building and capital equipment out of current revenue. This situation puts a severe strain on the taxpayers as well as a short limit on the salaries that can be paid and the educational services that can be given. As a result, education languishes in many parts of our country. The sad part of it is that it does not need to languish. We have in Canada plenty of building materials and a sufficient amount of labour to do the building. If the federal government would give some help to

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the provinces to meet the terrific need for new buildings they would be rendering a real service to general education in this country.

I suggest there are several practical ways by which this aid can be advanced without having to dip into the treasury. The first one is this. In the late thirties an act called the Municipal Improvements Assistance Act was passed through this house. It provided for loans to municipalities and school divisions for self-liquidating projects, at a low rate of interest, namely two per cent, and covering up to twenty years in time. The loans were guaranteed successively by the municipalities, the provincial authorities and the federal government. To my knowledge and in my experience this act worked well until loans under it were suspended as the war situation became more intense. I suggest that the act be taken out of the moth-balls, and that the federal government make some contribution to the welfare of education in the provinces by resuming the loans for self-liquidating projects under that act. Certainly school plants and improvements could be classed as self-liquidating projects to qualify for such loans.

Another way by which aid could be advanced is this. In certain provinces, notably Saskatchewan and Alberta, it would be possible for the federal government to give substantial aid to the cause of education by agreeing to release all or substantial portions of the school lands trust moneys for the purpose of setting up a capital loan fund from which school districts could borrow at low rates of interest in order to provide new school accommodations that are so urgently needed in those two provinces. The Alberta fund, which is administered under this government, now amounts to more than \$12 million. It is invested in dominion securities, the income from which is supposed to be paid over to the province for educational purposes. Since the cost of education has grown to such large proportions, I can see no logical reason why the provinces and the dominion should not revise the school lands trust fund agreements so as to make available the substantial moneys as a revolving loan fund for capital purposes in the field of education. I urge the federal government to give sympathetic consideration to this proposal and even to go so far as to find out if the provincial governments that are concerned, notably Saskatchewan and Alberta, would be ready to revise those agreements.

There is a third way by which federal aid could be extended to education. Many school divisional and district boards, especially in rural areas, are making commendable efforts