

partners, as I said a moment ago. I might add that the Government has an assistance program under which the employees which unfortunately have been laid off will be retrained in other fields of specialization.

● (2115)

[English]

BILINGUALISM—EDUCATION OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN. (B)
NATIVE INDIAN CHILDREN—ACCESS TO ABORIGINAL
LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago I addressed two questions to the Secretary of State (Mr. Joyal). I pointed out that in a number of our larger cities, Montreal, Winnipeg, Vancouver and Toronto to mention a few, there are a substantial number of students who just are not making it. They have not got the background and the command of the official languages which permit them to keep up with their classes and to get the education which they need if they are to succeed as adults in our society.

Who are these students? They are immigrant children, children who come from families who have come to Canada from countries where they speak neither English nor French, and the language which is spoken at home is a language which is not used in our schools or in our society as a whole, or, they are Native children. Native people have been moving into our cities in very large numbers.

The immigrant children are here because the federal Government encouraged immigration from the countries from which they came. Native children are in our cities because Native people have been leaving the reserves in very large numbers. Both of these groups of children are finding it very difficult to succeed in obtaining the education which they need.

Country-wide testing is done. There is a test which is called the Canadian Basic Skills Test. It was recently applied in Winnipeg. It was found that in the core area of Winnipeg—and it is true in other cities, I am sure—the schools which are largely populated by immigrant and Native children had test scores which were disastrously low. They were as low as 5 per cent or 10 per cent on a scale of 100 per cent. The average pass mark is 50 per cent.

By the time these children reach Grade 6, many of them are only reading at a Grade 3 or Grade 4 level. The result is that they fall further and further behind as more pressure is put on them in the higher grades. Many of them leave school. In fact, it is very clear that a high percentage of these students never finish high school.

We are in a period of time when society demands that young people entering the job market need to know a great deal more than ever before. They must have a firm foundation, not just in language, but in mathematics and in some of the sciences. These young people are doomed to failure. They are the immediate losers, but society as a whole will be the loser for generations to come because these young people who are not receiving adequate education simply cannot succeed.

Adjournment Debate

The Minister answered my questions by saying that the federal Government was already involved in helping to finance the education of these people by a program known as English as a second language. The program is working. In the City of Winnipeg, 1,100 immigrant children and 1,500 Native children are participating in that program.

● (2120)

The Minister is wrong if he thinks that all that is needed is help through the program for English as a second language. A great deal more is needed if those young people are to be brought up to the standards which society demands. There is a need for more teachers' aids and special work books which relate to immigrant and native children and their cultural backgrounds. The hours need to be longer so that these children can be helped to make up the difference in their shortcomings and their backgrounds. We need teachers who are trained to meet the multicultural challenge. The parents need to be helped to learn the language and to learn more about our history, particularly the mothers who do not go out to work, many of whom will never learn either the English or French language. What is required is a tremendous effort on the part of the local school district. But, Mr. Speaker, they do not have the financial ability to meet the requirements, and neither do the provinces.

What I am urging the Minister and the Government to do is to face up to their responsibilities. I know that the constitutional responsibility for education rests with the provinces. However, the children I talk about are there because the federal Government encouraged them to be there. I say that the federal Government should accept its moral responsibility and help to finance the educational programs which are needed to help these young people fit into our society and become full citizens, able to take their places as they should.

Mr. Robert Bockstael (Parliamentary Secretary to Secretary of State): Mr. Speaker, in replying to the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow), when he mentions the requirements of children whose language spoken at home is neither English or French, the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Roberts) has already made arrangements with his provincial colleagues to renegotiate the federal-provincial agreement on the citizenship and language instruction agreement, as well as the language text book agreement. The impetus for renegotiation of the agreements has come from the Treasury Board, which expressed concern over the "open-ended" nature of the agreement; from the provinces, who reviewed these agreements in 1980 with a view to renegotiating the needs of these particular children; and from the community, which following an immigrant women's conference in Toronto in 1981 gave a report which is reflected in these recommendations.

At present there is a departmental discussion paper drafted and there are consultations under way with CEIC, the Ministry of State for Social Development, the Treasury Board Secretariat and the federal-provincial relations office. Following the completion of consultations with the central agencies