

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

I would point out today that this matter of education and of poverty can no longer be solved by individuals on an individual basis, and that it has got to be dealt with by government action. We hear a great deal about the brain drain after university, with our students going down to the United States, but the brain drain after university is as nothing compared with the brain wastage because students cannot get to university in the first place.

I think it is a twofold wastage, Mr. Speaker. It is a wastage for the individual and for our society. For the individual it is a matter of wasted talents. Many young people are condemned to a lifetime of frustration. They are condemned to much less than they could have, than their native ability would make possible with university education. They are condemned to a bread and tea existence instead of a full, modern, all-round diet that would be possible if education could be given to them fully. Wasted talents are the first thing I bring up as a loss for the individual.

There is also the definite matter of much lower income. The Second Annual Review of the Economic Council of Canada points out that those with a university degree have an average income of more than two and a half times that of those with only elementary education, and more than twice the average of those who have only one to three years of high school.

To put it another way, the average male who gets to grade 8 will earn in later life an income of \$3,526. If he gets a university degree he will earn \$9,188. In addition, the higher the level of education the greater are the earnings differences between younger and older age groups. Those with university degrees get higher earnings all their lives and the higher standards of living that such earnings bring. That is the individual side of it.

In connection with our society, as far back as Adam Smith it was recognized that education is an investment in human capital. This continent realized early in its history that public schooling must be made universal. Now we are realizing slowly that horse-and-buggy education is not good enough for the atomic age. We need to make university education available today on the same free basis as public and high school education.

Those in poverty are simply not getting to university now. The Canadian Union of Students on March 16 of this year gave figures to show that less than one quarter of

the Canadian population, 23.3 per cent to be exact, sends nearly one half of all students to Canadian universities. Some 48 per cent of the students contacted gave their fathers' occupations as professional, proprietary or managerial. Families with salaries of over \$10,000 provide 25 per cent of all university students, whereas families with salaries of less than \$3,000 provide only 9 per cent of all university students.

• (10:10 p.m.)

No wonder that Mr. Robert Rabinovitch, analyst for the Canada Student Means Survey commented that Canadian students by and large are not representative of Canadians generally, but rather bear the characteristics of the middle and upper income classes of Canadian society. Professor Porter, of Carleton University when speaking to a seminar of the Canadian Teachers Federation yesterday made the statement—

—that only the granting of equality in the education system can make possible equality of opportunity. The key is university attendance, he added.

He flatly rejected statements by some education officials that no qualified student is denied a university education through lack of money. "I just don't believe that," Prof. Porter declared, citing the case of a bright graduate student who was forced to leave Carleton this year. "He was so deeply in debt he just couldn't risk staying any longer."

Government loans to students are not the answer and are in fact a backward step, Prof. Porter asserted. "The federal student loan program is an invitation to a student to get into debt to acquire a university education. It may seem rational to a middle-class mind but it will not be an incentive for low-income families to keep their sons in college."

He said he could not understand why the nation's politicians moved so slowly in expanding educational opportunity. "Maybe it doesn't get votes like medicare or even roads."

I am going to say I think there should be sufficient poverty now. A quarter of the population live in poverty, according to the government's own statistics. That ought to be a high enough percentage for the government to take steps so that the people in the poverty group can get free education if they have the mental ability to do so? Again I ask the minister, what degree of poverty must we have before action is taken?

Hon. Mitchell Sharp (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether I am speaking tonight for the Minister of National Health and Welfare, to whom this question was directed in the first instance, but I should like to say by way of a brief response