

Canada Student Loans Act

That is a substantial amount of money and shows that a substantial number of students have been assisted by this loan provision. But this is far in excess of the 10,000 student scholarships—I underline the word “scholarships”—that were part of a campaign pledge made by former Prime Minister, Lester B. Pearson.

But, Mr. Speaker, student loans are really but a half-way house, when you really get down to examining their rationale. Although they are necessary under our present system, they are definitely a crutch. Up to 80 per cent of the cost of secondary education today is paid by the government, either federal or provincial.

The Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. MacEachen) made a statement to the House today on the efforts being made to increase employment opportunities for summer students. I think that since industry, the public and our institutions all benefit from education, not forgetting the benefit received by the students themselves, it would seem to me that it would only be logical to raise the other 20 per cent of the cost of education. We might then arrive at the point where those students who require summer employment in order to finance their education would not at the same time be competing against heads of families who are often marginally employed, in some cases putting them out of work, and this in spite of the fact that there is usually a seasonal upswing in summer employment opportunities. I think we should examine tuition costs from this point of view. I am not sure that this House, however, is the right place to look at the matter in view of the limits of federal jurisdiction in educational matters. Nevertheless, I feel the subject is worthy of mention.

Before I resume my seat, I should like to comment on the sliding scale that is being proposed in the legislation. This scale is based not on the number of young people in Canada between the ages of 18 and 24 but, instead, on the number of students presently enrolled in post-secondary education who are between the ages of 18 and 24. The formula is based on what the condition is rather than on what the condition should be. The formula ignores the fact that in this age group of 18 to 24, 50 per cent of our students may have never completed high school. These people should be encouraged to complete their education assured that they will find a place in higher education. These dropouts are indicative of a waste of talent and an inefficient use of

human resources. Their talents should be developed to contribute to the development of this country.

I would also suggest to the House that one of the difficulties encountered in the provision of secondary education is that education is often not accessible to students with merit or scholastic ability but instead is provided only to those by affluent parents and to those students who live reasonably close to a university. I believe we should look more and more to the time when students attend university on the basis of ability, not on the basis of how much money their parents have. If necessary, the students should receive travel assistance. Today our university students represent a relatively small and affluent section of the population. We must do much more to see that university education is spread uniformly and fairly through the total population. Intelligence is not confined to any single economic class.

• (4:30 p.m.)

That is the main emphasis I put on the remarks I made this afternoon. I feel the legislation is perhaps of assistance to many students. There will be an increasing number of students who wish to take advantage of this measure. They will not only wish to do so but will be forced to because there are no other alternative provisions to adequately fulfil the demands and needs of young Canadians for post secondary education.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I bow to John.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I had a little difficulty determining who was on his feet first. Does the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate wish to speak?

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): I have much pleasure in yielding to my hon. friend.

Mr. John Lundrigan (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, I hardly know how to interpret that remark, but I will take my chances and accept it graciously. I intend only to take a few minutes.

I am interested in seeing how the government continues to be involved in education, even though it is in its efforts coming in through the back door. Let me preface my remarks by saying I speak now on the basis of my opinion. Perhaps one of the reasons I was elected at the federal level was that I felt the government of Canada should assume