

Oral Questions

Hon. David Crombie (Secretary of State of Canada): Mr. Speaker, allow me to first of all thank the Hon. Member for his question, and to congratulate him for the motion which he now has before the House with respect to the establishment of that council.

In response to the Hon. Member's question, I would simply like to say that yesterday the Chairman of the National Forum on Post-Secondary Education, Dr. Brian Segal, appeared before the standing committee of Parliament and asked us specifically to move in a way which was consistent with the co-operation from the provinces. In doing so, we will be able to build upon that for the future programs with respect to post-secondary education.

Within the spirit of the National Forum in Saskatoon, and also at the request of the Chairman of the National Forum, Dr. Brian Segal, I would hope that the Hon. Member would refer his Bill to the parliamentary committee so it would have the appropriate action, which I know that the Hon. Member is looking for.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Hon. William Rompkey (Grand Falls—White Bay—Labrador): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that there was a clear call coming out of Saskatoon for action on a national basis, recognizing provincial jurisdiction, but also recognizing national need.

My question is the following. If the provinces, the students, the teachers, and the federal Government came together in Saskatoon for three days, why can they not come together again? Why should it stop in Saskatoon? Why can we not have it for three years or thirty years? Will the Minister move in that direction and establish a national advisory council on post-secondary education?

Hon. David Crombie (Secretary of State of Canada): Mr. Speaker, with great consideration to my hon. friend, it is not national unless people agree to it. The provinces have indicated that in their meeting in February they will be willing to consider all such matters.

I say to the Hon. Member that if he is really interested in building something national instead of something only federal, then he would please accede to the wishes of many people who wish to see us move beyond where we have been on post-secondary education.

The only way that we can do so is with co-operation in this country, and not single-minded propositions from one side of the fence. That is why I implore the Hon. Member, please do not divide this issue, come together with the provinces and those people who want to co-operate on post-secondary education.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PASSAGE OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, my question is also directed to the Secretary of State who has asked my colleague to present his Bill to the Secretary of State's committee.

My question to the Secretary of State is very simple. If he wishes that Bill to go to committee, will his Government support the Bill on second reading so that it will go to committee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. David Crombie (Secretary of State of Canada): Mr. Speaker, first, it is not my committee, it is the House's committee. It is the standing committee of the House of Commons to which the Bill in question would be sent.

Second, I would say to the Hon. Member that the important thing is to have the subject matter before the committee. By the way, that is the request of the chairman of the forum in Saskatoon. Dr. Brian Segal, the President of Ryerson, speaking on behalf of the spirit of Saskatoon, has asked that that be done. I would suggest that the Hon. Member quit playing politics with it and accede to that request.

• (1450)

Mr. McCurdy: Mr. Speaker, I find that to be an extraordinary, unusual rebuttal from the Secretary of State. It is completely out of character and somewhat more political than I would have thought him capable of.

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT SUPPORT PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, let me put the question to him in a straightforward manner. By the way, I was at the committee meeting yesterday and I do not need to be advised about what Mr. Segal said. The Canadian Federation of Students, the AUCC, and just about everybody concerned about post-secondary education have supported an advisory council.

My question to the Minister is a simple one. Will his side of the House support the Bill? That support in principle would be a signal to the whole community that the Bill go to committee as he would suggest.

Hon. David Crombie (Secretary of State of Canada): Mr. Speaker, of course the character of my response was dictated by the spirit of Saskatoon, which is why I spoke with that kind of heat.

I want to say to the Hon. Member and to his colleague in the other Party that of course everybody wants the same thing. The difference is this: if we want to accomplish it in order to build for the future, I implore the other two Parties to work with me and the provinces and we will do something. If we simply want to sail off on our own to win the day, that will not be of benefit to post-secondary students. I ask them to please