CHAPTER III

EDUCATION

Education calls for separate treatment from other social services both because of the nature of the subject and because it was expressly assigned (subject to certain controls in section 93 of the British North America Act) exclusively to provincial jurisdiction in 1867. But the expansion in the concept of education since 1867 has been as unexpected as the expansion in social services generally. In effect education is no longer thought of as concerned entirely with the instruction of the young during the highly formative period of life—instruction which is of decisive importance as regards religious training and the preservation of language and culture. Training for adolescents and adults is given today on a scale hardly anticipated in 1867, and the development of the radio and of organized research has brought new techniques into educational activities. Thus education, like the social services, has developed aspects which have led to action by the Dominion and which have been the grounds for many representations to this Commission by organizations in addition to the representations of provincial governments.1

There are some Dominion functions such as military training, agricultural training, and radio programs which indirectly invite excursions into the educational field. At the same time, financial considerations have led the provinces to welcome help from the Dominion in matters such as technical education and youth training. In other directions cultural activities of the Dominion (art collections, museums, libraries) have an educational aspect.

The recommendation which we have made elsewhere that the Parliament of Canada should have full power to provide unemployment aid for those recognized as employable by an employment service under Dominion control, would, if it were acted on and if the Parliament of Canada proceeded to deal with unemployment aid, make the training of unemployed youth a matter of even greater federal concern than at present. While the Dominion has a particular interest in technical education and in youth training, it is the function of the provinces to help in forestalling unemployment by providing an ordinary education of such a character as to turn out young men and women likely to secure employment.

Since the Dominion would delimit from time to time the extent of the liability which it was prepared to assume in granting unemployment aid (e.g. the age at which it would accept youths as "employable") it might make its help contingent on reasonable co-operation by the provinces. It is safe to assume that the provinces will be willing and ready to offer their full co-operation both in providing a suitable education for all and in contributing to the training of those who, at the age of recognition as employable, may be found to stand in need of further training. The needs of the provinces for vocational and technical training are, of course, part of their general fiscal need.

We have already said that the instruction of the young during their formative years is a matter which the provinces must continue to control (subject, of course, to the safeguard for religious minorities provided in the British North America Act and amendments). A free hand in something so important to the social and cultural life of the people seems to us to be vital to any provincial autonomy worthy of the name, and it is obvious that any attempts to alter the existing arrangements would meet with powerful opposition and would provoke profound resentment. But it has been suggested to us that in upholding the freedom of choice of a territorial unit viz., the province, we may be disregarding the freedom of choice of

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1 Ex. 24, School District of Winnipeg No. 1; Ex. 28, Man. School Trustees' Ass'n; Ex. 29, Man. Teachers' Federation; Ex. 29, Catholic Minority of Man.; Ex. 61, Sask. School Trustees' Ass'n; Ex. 62, Sask. Teachers' Federation; Ex. 97, Canadian Teachers' Federation; Ex. 101, Canadian Association for Adult Education; Ex. 185, B.C. School Trustees' Ass'n; Ex. 184, Report on School Finance in B.C.; Ex. 268, Catholic Minority of B.C.; Ex. 244, Alta. School Trustees' Ass'n; Ex. 245, Alta. Teachers' Ass'n; Ex. 269, Ont. School Trustees' and Ratepayers' Ass'n; Ex. 291, Ont. Teachers' Council; Ex. 344, Mémoire de la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Montréal endorsed and approved by La Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste des Trois-Rivières, L'Association générale des étudiants de l'Université de Montréal, Les Chevaliers de Gariel, L'Association Canado-Américaine, Les Patriotes de Rosemont, L'Association des hôteliers de la campagne de la province de Québec, and L'Union des vétérans canadiens; Ex. 347, Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers of Que.; Ex. 351, Comité permanent des Congrès de la langue française; Ex. 352, Les Acadiens et les Canadien-français des provinces Maritimes; Ex. 353, Les Canadiens-français du Manitoba; Ex. 354, Les Canadiens-français de la Saskatchewan; Ex. 355, Les Canadiens-français de l'Alberta; Ex. 379, N.B. Teachers' Ass'n; Ex. 400, Roman Catholic Separate School Trustees' Ass'n of Ont.
individuals, viz., the parents. It has been urged upon us that the existing safeguards for religious minorities should be extended so that Roman Catholic minorities in every province may be free to insist that their taxes for education be used for the upkeep of separate schools. It was further urged that adequate time should be provided in the school curriculum for religious instruction during school hours. These representations indicate the existence in several provinces of a sense of grievance which may well contribute to national disunity as well as to lack of harmony within the province concerned. But we are compelled to say that it does not fall within our terms of reference to advise the provinces as to what course they should pursue. Representations by persons and organizations interested should be made to the individual province concerned, which alone, except as provided by section 93 of the British North America Act, has jurisdiction over matters of education.

Many representations have been made to us that financial help should be extended by the Dominion to the provinces for various purposes, such as scholarships, technical training, grants to be used for general educational purposes provided that the provinces did not reduce their own expenditure on education. These representations appear to have been inspired largely by consternation at the reductions in educational expenditure which certain provinces, under the stress of the depression, have felt compelled to make. It has even been contended that the Dominion is bound to see that there is equal educational opportunity (as far as is practicable) for every Canadian child. We have the deepest sympathy for these views which have been advanced by many of the organizations most closely associated with education in Canada, and we share to the full the regret that, especially in recent years, education has been terribly neglected in many of the poorer parts of the country and that wholly disproportionate sacrifices have been imposed on those who have devoted their lives to this important public service. But the representations appear to us to go too far in denying the right of each province to decide the relative importance of expenditure on education and expenditure on other competing services. It is our hope that provision can be made for the fiscal needs of all provinces, including within those needs provision for the education of the young. Our financial proposals aim at placing every province in a position to discharge its responsibilities for education (on a scale that is within the means of the people of Canada) if it chooses to do so. Once this position is established it seems to us best that education, like every other form of welfare service in a democratic community, should have to fight for its life, and that a generous provision for the education of the children of the nation should depend, not on any arbitrary constitutional provision, but on the persistent conviction of the mass of the people that they must be ready to deny themselves some of the good things of life in order to deal fairly by their children. Hence we do not think that it would be wise or appropriate for the Dominion to make grants to the provinces ear-marked for the support of general education.

A second type of representation has been concerned with the use of relatively small grants from the Dominion to safeguard and stabilize certain phases of education which are believed to be of peculiar national importance. We have expressed our objection to grants for elementary and secondary education where any suspicion of Dominion interference would seem to us dangerous; but it may be of use to outline the sort of thing which might be accomplished by such methods in other directions where the same objection does not apply. The best illustration seems to us to be found in the field of university education, with which we are all personally familiar. But, precisely because...
of our own close connections with Canadian universities, we are refraining from making a recommendation on this subject.

Successful university administration requires some assurance of a moderately stable budget over a reasonable period of time. One reason is that important contractual commitments have to be made for a fairly long period in advance, and that reasonable security of tenure is as necessary for good university instructors as it is for good civil servants. Academic freedom itself, which is an important ingredient in the democratic structure of our country, requires that in institutions supported by the state no appointment should be directly or indirectly at the mercy of political pressure. The efficient functioning of universities in all regions of Canada (and, therefore, in all provinces of Canada) is essential if some equality of influence in the national life is to be maintained as between these regions. The extinction of a provincial university would strike a heavy blow at the importance of that province in the next generation of Canadian history.

It is this last consideration which explains why the Western Provinces have undertaken to maintain universities at a time when their own revenues were far from assured, and when it was barely practicable to endow such an institution with the assured income necessary for its efficient functioning. It explains why, all things considered, almost astonishing efforts have been made to preserve these institutions during the depression even when masses of people were at the verge of destitution.

It is worth remembering that it was to the thoughtful generosity of a foreign endowment that the four universities of Western Canada were indebted for help during three critical years which enabled them to survive this period without complete loss of initiative.

In these circumstances it is conceivable that even the provinces might welcome a small Dominion grant to their universities made contingent on the maintenance over a period of some years of the provincial grants to the same institution and on the preservation of high academic standards. If this is the case, a relatively small Dominion annual grant divided among the provinces in rough proportion to their population for the benefit of institutions which receive help from the state might play a peculiarly useful part in our national life. The additional funds, while preferably to be spent at the discretion of the university, would make it possible (wherever this appeared to academic authorities the most useful course) to provide scholarships and bursaries which would bring its opportunities within the reach of poor but able students.

The next point which we have to make is illustrative of the importance of universities in the national life of Canada. Among the activities of the Dominion government which possess an educational character is the organization of scientific research in the physical sciences under the National Research Council. It is unnecessary to expatiate on the excellent work which the Council has been doing in close co-operation with Canadian universities upon whom it is largely dependent for its personnel. It has been represented to us that analogous research work in the social sciences might be organized, and that, in addition to the Dominion Bureau of Statistics, we might have a Social Science Research Council which would co-ordinate and in some degree direct the research work in these sciences which is being done in Canadian universities and elsewhere. There is a real need for some such institution in Canada and it could serve a most useful purpose in analysing the social problems with which current legislation is designed to deal.

Attention has also been called to the great need for a national library in Canada. While we are in sympathy with such a project we feel that it is a matter of policy on which it would not be appropriate for us to make a positive recommendation. But we wish to point out that this is another example of an educational or cultural activity which, if judged expedient, could be appropriately undertaken by the Dominion government.

9 Ex. 231, Memo. on Research in the Social Services, Ex. pp. 5858-64.
10 Ex. 211, Brief of B.C. Library Ass'n; Ex. 294, Brief of Ont. Library Ass'n.