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| ***Province*** | ***Législature*** | ***Session*** | ***Type de discours*** | ***Date du discours*** | ***Locuteur*** | ***Fonction du locuteur*** | ***Parti politique*** |
| Manitoba | 29e | 4e | Remarques préliminaires à l’étude des crédits du Ministère de l’Éducation | 2 juin 1972 | Ben Hanushak | Minister of Education | NPD |

Mr. Chairman, it's my pleasure to have the privilege of introducing the Estimates of the Department of Education, for which I am responsible and for which office I assumed in the fall of 1971, Education as it seems always to have been, it's continually in the news. Education is very closely related to people and to our society. It involves so many in our society, both directly and indirectly, but it would be hard to conceive of any activity which encompasses more active members. Since the Estimates of the Department of Colleges and Universities Affairs have already been reviewed, there's no need for me to fully elaborate on the division of the former Youth and Education Department. It became evident that while there were still common concerns, the major roles of the two divisions within the former department were quickly becoming more and more distinct one from the other. And after serious deliberation and consultation it was decided to separate elementary and secondary school responsibilities from Colleges and Universities in order that each might develop their own distinct direction.

Now this division, Mr. Chairman, as might be expected resulted in a reassignment of senior personnel, with some going to the new department under my colleague, The Honourable Minister of Universities and Colleges Affairs; and may I state publicly a sincere word of thanks to those staff members who have left my department and joined the newly created one, for their dedicated service over the many past years, and at the same time a word of appreciation to my staff for the first-rate co-operation that I've received from each and every one of them during this period of readjustment which is somewhat more difficult than a year in the ordinary course of events of any department, Dr. Henry Janzen speaking as a quance lecturer in Canadian education began by saying: "There is little doubt that the educational revolution on which we are embarked will continue in the immediate years ahead with an increasing tempo of change. To meet this challenge it is important that those involved in education planning understand the past trends, assess our present status and resources and be ready to move with appropriate discernment into the future."

Before dealing with my Estimates in greater detail, may I comment briefly on the points which Dr. Janzen mentions because to a very large degree they reflect my own philosophy, my own views on the direction in which our Department of Education ought to move, It is a question, Mr. Chairman, whether we have ever really taken the time to assess an educational system which was developed to meet the requirements of a society which emphasized a certain set of values, which saw education as meeting a certain set of needs and producing a certain type of individual. Now this is not to say, Mr. Chairman, that the system has been completely unsatisfactory or unworkable, but it is to say that when society itself is subject to challenge, when the type of education being provided, the method by which it is being provided and the reasons why it is being provided, are all under question, it is vital that all of us develop a perspective that will help us to understand that what has been accepted practice may no longer be considered as such. Bearing this in mind we must be continually searching for alternatives to our present practice, not simply to change for the sake of changing but to redirect and to reorient our planning to a more positive and futuristic course. Closely linked to an understanding of the past is an assessment of our present status.

Naturally the first fact that we must face is the continually accelerating rate of change itself. It is well-known that science and the technologies have advanced far beyond the comprehension of most, therefore is the education which we are providing adequate for those who will inherit the future, which will undergo even more radical change than we have experienced? Are the values which we embrace sufficient to serve as stable guides in a world of such apparent impermanence? Now certainly we cannot educate our children to assume that when they become adults the world will be substantially the same as it is today. We must take into consideration that we are in a time now when leisure for the labour force is rapidly increasing.

A 35, a 40-hour work week has become a reality for a large segment of our society so that a person now works less than half his waking hours. The significant feature of this increased leisure is unfortunately that the majority of people have not learned to use it wisely. Therefore with leisure time available our role at this stage is to encourage and in some instances to ensure that community use of school facilities is carried out to the fullest degree possible. It is fulfilling this objective that will guarantee to a greater extent that the citizens of Manitoba receive full value for the dollar investment they make in education through my department.

Other aspects of our present status to which we must address ourselves are those of urbanization, changing family life , the delicate balance between competition and co-operation and the very large problem of co-ordinating efforts for improvement in a society in which we expect a large scale participation, yet where we find so many who are not willing to accept community responsibility. Perhaps too little attention is being given in our schools to the learning of genuine respect for and understanding of other peoples, due in a large measure to self-satisfaction with our own affluent control and it is this considered attitude Mr. Chairman, that has caused us to broaden our optional programs markedly. It is because of our appreciation and concern for the acceptance of the need for individuals to develop in their own personal direction that has prompted us to enrich the subject matter in our school curriculum in an attempt to make learning more meaningful and more purposeful. We wish to make the educational process and our school community institutions rather than public utilities.

When we look back at the cost of education in the late 40s and the cost today, we can see what appears to be an almost unbelievable increase; and what has caused it? Firstly, enrolments have risen notably, In 1950 there were only 126,000 children in all the schools in Manitoba, By 1960 this has risen to 184,000, and last year it was 243,906. And secondly, not only have the enrolments risen but the secondary school enrolments have risen by a higher percentage than the elementary ones. In 1950 there were about 11,300 students at the secondary school level; last year this number has risen to over 49,000 – more than a 400 percent change. Now this change in the mix between elementary and secondary students resulting from increased numbers of students and higher rates of retention in schools has of course contributed very substantially to the increased costs of education.

The schools have been characterized by new programs. Some of these new programs are much more costly than the ones offered previously. There was a day when the only choice that students had in secondary school was to take a university entrance course or to take the commercial course and far too many took the university entrance course when they had neither the ability nor the intention of going to university and were not really interested in that kir1d of academic program.

Last fall , Mr. Chairman, four new regional secondary schools were opened in the province, one in Selkirk, one in Dauphin, one in St . James-Assiniboia and one in River East, East Kildonan. This coming September two more will open, one in Swan River, one in Steinbach, and next fall one will open in Brandon. These schools added to the Technical Vocational High School and R, B. Russell in Winnipeg are providing a variety of programs which were simply not available to many students beforehand. They are, as you are aware, expensive schools to operate, There are some who argue that we should not be giving vocational education at the secondary level at all. These people consider that students should continue with their general education and then move directly into a post-secondary vocational program, Now while this may seem an excellent theory and many do subscribe to it and I find it's one that I can support except for one thing: it ignores the fact that many· students are not academically minded and they do not find the ordinary general course stimulating in any way. They do not have skills in that direction and they do not intend to engage in occupations with that kind of base. Vocational programs give them an opportunity to explore the world of work in a different area and prepare themselves for entrance into many occupations which are basic in our society.

The secondary school programs offered in these institutions are not narrow training but are rather broad programs which give students wide area of choice in a vocational field. Many students who would otherwise have dropped out now remain in school because these programs are relative to their needs.

Everyone agrees that the teacher is the key to education. However I feel teacher education must undergo grave change to meet differing conditions and student objectives. Faculties of Education in this province and others are constantly evaluating their programs with a view to updating and redirecting their efforts in the instruction of those training to become teachers. There is little doubt that emphasis will change, that there will be greater attention paid to developing techniques in the teaching of our native children, for example. Presently, little experience is gained by the undergraduates in teaching in rural and remote areas. We look for this kind of experience to become again as it once was an important part of the training process. Further, we shall also expect to see methodology presented which will make our beginning teachers more familiar with the needs of exceptional children who will more and more be found not in special institutions nor in related settings but in the classrooms in which we teach the bulk of our school population, where they can learn with other children not just the skills of mathematics and science but where they can experience the essential tasks so important to all children who are just growing up.

Another characteristic of today's schools is smaller classes. During the 1930s classes in many schools in Manitoba were composed of 40 or more pupils. While some consider the smaller classes result in better instruction this remains a highly debatable issue. However, it is probable, Mr. Chairman, that a teacher who had 40 or more students simply could not cope with the individual problems that the students had and will have. Such classes may have contributed significantly to a high dropout rate. We simply cannot afford to have school classes all of 20 or fewer pupils so that numbers will always be a compromise between the desire of teachers to have smaller classes, so that they can do a better job for each child on the one hand, and the necessities of our society which require classes to be large enough to keep education costs within bounds.

For many years school boards in Manitoba were building schools as fast as they could have money by-laws passed in order to keep pace with the growing population. That requirement has now slackened. The demand now is to build new schools where populations are developing, for example, the fringes of Winnipeg or in some of the known growth centres found elsewhere in the province and as well as to replace .old worn-out schools .

As you are aware, Mr. Chairman, all schools in Manitoba are now built by the province. We have dispensed with the necessity for money by-laws. Further, we are constantly examining the quality and the cost of construction. Presently I have two studies under way in my department related to these concerns. One is investigating the costs of schools and basic guidelines relative to construction of schools; the other study is examining a rather wider area with respect to the types of schools which might be built and the relationship of these facilities to other community functions.

As I said earlier, our society is constantly looking at the cost of education. Of this we are cognizant; undoubtedly we must look at the costs of education in the proper perspective. That perspective, Mr. Chairman, needs to take account of the development of our society, of the needs of students and of the kind of services which need to be provided in the entire social field. It is obvious, for example, that proper medical care is needed to ensure that children have adequate health to profit from their school experience, It is equally obvious that some of the money which we have been spending on special education for handicapped children can be limited in the future if such handicaps are related to conditions which prenatal and postnatal care can help remedy. Our programs of social assistance are also related to education and because these societal issues form a singular concern, you are aware a special committee of Cabinet has been established to deal with health, education and social policies, and the purpose here is to integrate the services that are provided in these areas by our government throughout the province.

It may be asked, Mr. Chairman, what is the purpose of education. Because of our limping Canadian economy this question has arisen with increasing frequency. If young people are to be faced with unemployment they naturally tend to be skeptical about an educational system that is preparing them for a life in which they will have nothing purposeful or meaningful to do, The Government of Manitoba has taken firm steps to ensure that the situation in our province would not reach the state of certain other provinces. We feel with justification that we have been more than a little successful in these efforts. It is my view, Mr. Chairman, that most people, and this especially refers to young persons, still want to work, and most young people want to have an education which will help them not only to work in their communities but also to live full and complete lives of responsibility and service.

My department has assisted schools to continually re-examine programs of study in modifications and experimental curricular programs are under way in many centres. Those who plan school programs must be consciously aware of the changing world, have some knowledge of likely trends in that world of tomorrow and be in a position to suggest contents and method that will lead to the kind of responsible participation idealistically desired, It is this that has caused our elective program to broaden markedly. Innovation in education represents a factor for change; a means of challenging existing realities and ideas, a means of proposing new solutions; a method of developing critical attitudes; ways of developing methods for invention and discovery. Motivation can only be derived from desire and it is my hope that my department and I can provide the leadership necessary to stimulate that force.

In order to do this, Mr. Chairman, I have taken the initiative and instituted a thorough review of the structure of my department together with an analysis of the educational services being provided by the various branches. This is not to say that I am in any way dissatisfied with the present structure or that I consider it unworkable. It is to say that I wish to know whether a restructuring would assist us in meeting the needs of a society undergoing fundamental change. I have, therefore, established a task force to analyze the structure and role of the department and to recommend to me any changes which they see as being beneficial. Because I consider this to be a matter of extreme urgency I've instructed the task force to report to me within the next few weeks. It is hoped that any reorganization or restructuring will be completed over the summer and the department be in its new operational form by the opening of the 72/73 school year.

And now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say a word or two about the major divisions into which my Estimates fall. In the few minutes remaining, I would just like to skim over very quickly because no doubt there will be more opportunity as we deal with mv Estimates section by section. But to highlight some of the branches, some of the programs: the Planning and Research branch instituted under my predecessor will continue to provide the major thrust in identifying innovative practices. During the past year the branch has undertaken a research project designed to elicit from Manitobans a relative statement of goals for the school system in an attempt to develop a system of evaluation and need; assessment within the schools themselves.

Grants have been made to school divisions to enable them to test out alternative approaches to problems connected with inner city schools, community school relations, individualized instruction and the need for individual humanistic relevant teaching and learning. A total of 14 projects are under way and they are being constantly evaluated. At this juncture, Mr. Chairman, I would also wish to mention the activities of the branch in the areas of early childhood services, differentiated staffing, volunteer program and new careers. New careers which is under the direction, under a joint responsibility of my Department and Colleges and Universities Affairs. Early Childhood Services was developed as an inter-departmental program to produce a basic philosophy as well as funding guidelines for alternative methods of providing services in the years prior to kindergarten.

Experimental projects related to day care, nursery schools have been inaugurated and these will be continued and expanded as they prove their value to the education system in general. As a means of allowing for more individualization of instruction through a smaller teacher-pupil ratio we are looking at differentiative staffing and for a curriculum more individualized than that which is possible in the traditional classroom situation.

In the area of volunteers it is estimated that as a result of our efforts in encouraging the use of volunteers there are now over 800 working at least one-half day per week in the Winnipeg schools alone. This is estimated to be an increase of better than 100 percent over the previous year, and further expansion and activity in this area will continue. Self-evident is the issue of educational costs continuing to rise sharply over the last decade, whether because of increasing enrolments, improved programs, higher salaries or lower pupil-teacher ratios. However, throughout this period there has also been a substantial increase in provincial support: During the past year the new Block Grant of $18.00 per pupil; the change in the division of costs of the Foundation Program -- 75 percent from provincial funds; the provision of a tax credit to all owners and tenants during the year 72; and the recently announced Education Property Tax Credit Plan have been significant items.

In keeping with the trend to greater local autonomy free textbooks were discontinued and a per pupil grant of $ 12.00 for print and non-print instructional material was provided. Earlier I mentioned the province continues to pay the full cost of new schools and additions plus the full cost of major capital renovations or replacements.

In a most significant area of instructional service special attention will continue to be given to new programs and procedures with respect to Indian and Metis children. We will continue to assist school boards in improving and extending whatever special programs may be required in an effort to overcome the handicap posed by sparsity of population in much of the province.

It is expected that recent legislation regarding residual costs will be used extensively in encouraging neighboring divisions to co-operate and collaborate in providing these valuable and vital resources. Now while there has been some re-education in the rapid rate of .curriculum change there will be no letup in our effort- to suit education to the differing needs of Manitobans. I should also mention that we have undertaken the development of a new branch within the Department -- the Professional Development Branch. The prime purpose of which is to provide greater opportunities for all of us in education. To improve our administrative techniques, explore untapped leadership potential and to recharge our energies that we may continue to cope successfully with the changing patterns that face us.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, may I say that there are no doubt many other areas, Child Development Services, which is not the responsibility of my department, and about which more debate may arise during further consideration of our Estimates, and other concerns which I have not mentioned. This is not because I consider them less important but simply because of time constraint I have had to make a definite selection of a few.

If members wish to raise questions concerning both the items which I have outlined and those which I have omitted and referred to in the Estimates , I'll be happy to answer them and deal with them as best I can during the consideration of the Estimates of my department.