

development, switching to high-tech and upgrading our industries, but at the same time the Government is slashing the R and D base at the university, the college and the institutional level to achieve that goal. It is inconsistent to expect a nation, which is limiting enrolment and cutting funds to education, to meet the high-tech, high productivity demands that we face in the future.

The inevitable prospect we face in B.C., as the students, the teachers and a hard pressed university have told us, is that the quality of education will diminish and access to educational institutions will reduce.

My father, who was a B.C. pioneer from a B.C. pioneering family, was able to go to school by working in the stables of a local doctor. At least he was able to get the money for a higher education and he graduated as a veterinarian. Our students today do not have that option. Those are the discouraging aspects of this Bill. This Bill will put an enormous strain on the educational system at a time when the economy and this Government in particular give our students no other option.

Mr. Cyril Keeper (Winnipeg-St. James): Mr. Speaker, I am glad I have a full seven minutes to speak in this debate regarding Bill C-12. I am rather surprised about it. While it was surprising enough to see a Tory rise to speak, I did expect the Hon. Member to continue for the full allocated time of ten minutes, which she did not do.

Bill C-12 is the Government's application of the six and five program to post-secondary education which my friend here in the Tory Party voted for. Basically, the six and five program is a political program rather than economic or social. This program is being applied to the educational system, but it has nothing to do with education in Canada. It has nothing to do with the needs of education, nothing to do with the needs of young people, or the needs of our economy. I say that this program is political because as we entered this recession the Government set up the six and five program in such a way as to claim credit for the fall in inflation, which was a natural result of a very deep recession unprecedented since the Great Depression. This program will allow the Government to take credit for bringing down inflation and to put the attention on inflation rather than on where it should be, which is on economic growth and employment.

It would be far better if the Government were to pay attention to the needs of education as it brings in a piece of legislation that affects so directly universities across the country. This legislation takes \$100 million out of the purse available for post-secondary education. One of the negative aspects of applying the six and five program to post-secondary education is simply that 6 per cent is an arbitrary number, an across-the-board number and it has nothing to do with need. The Government has failed to be selective in its application of fiscal restraint. If the Government had chosen and if the Government had wanted to be careful with the way it spent public tax dollars, it could have selected priority areas such as post-secondary education. The Government could have decided to give money to the universities and chosen not to give the money to other programs. For example, why continue with the

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PIP grants and the hand-outs to multinational oil companies at a time when the Government is limiting the amount of money for post-secondary education? While the Government takes \$100 million away from the universities and the future of our young people, it continues to give billions of dollars to the multinational oil companies. That demonstrates quite clearly the injustice of applying an arbitrary number such as 6 per cent to the expenditure level of a government.

The application of the six and five program and the taking away of the \$100 million from university funding is a severe blow to the concept of universal accessibility to post-secondary education. It results in the pushing up of tuition fees making it more difficult, not only for the poor to get into university, but also for the middle class. I make that point because if there is one thing that has characterized the present economic circumstances in Canada, the deep recession we are in today, is the fact that people who have not normally suffered are suffering today from the policies of the Government and the prevailing economic climate. The Government is refusing to do anything substantial or really do anything about it.

This is a blow to universal accessibility, not only in the sense that tuition fees are going up but also in the sense that as you limit the amount of money that goes from the federal Government to provincial Governments for post-secondary education, you make it much more difficult for provincial Governments to carry on with affirmative action programs for disadvantaged people, whether they be handicapped, women or native people.

In my Province of Manitoba there are some good and very successful special educational programs at the university level which have allowed for a significant increase in the university student body made up of native people. There are now significant numbers of native people attending the University of Manitoba. This has been made possible by the special educational programs. Cutting the amount of money which the federal Government gives to the provinces for post-secondary education places these programs under threat. Therefore, it is a blow to social justice and it is a blow to the sense of fair play in our society. People who have done without for decades, for hundreds of years, should not be threatened by the arbitrary expenditure policies of an insensitive Government. Not only is it more difficult today for people to go to university by reason of their income, but even those who get into university find that the quality of education is falling. The quality is being lowered by the cutbacks put in place by the Government here in this Bill. This Government should be withdrawing this Bill and putting more money into the purse for post-secondary education in order to keep up the quality of education.

Mr. Malone: The Government should be withdrawn.

Mr. Keeper: Absolutely. My colleague from the Conservative Party indicates that not only should this legislation be withdrawn but the Government should be withdrawn. That is a positive suggestion even though it comes from a partisan quarter.

The quality of education at universities is being threatened, Mr. Speaker.