

Established Programs Financing

available, class sizes have increased dramatically and in a number of instances the availability of classes has been shelved. Certainly the quality of education is being cut to the bone as a result of the combination of this capping by the Government on the one hand and attacks by the provincial government on the other.

Our critic in this area, the Hon. Member for New Westminster-Coquitlam, has pointed out very clearly that unless the federal Government is prepared to take some leadership and initiative in the area of post-secondary education, we will return very quickly to the days in which universities and post-secondary institutions were the enclaves of the elite. The appropriate response at this time is to establish, as I said earlier, a national task force of governments, post-secondary institution students and faculties which would allow for far more meaningful discussions on effective levels of funding in post-secondary education.

At the same time, we have to come to grips with the devastating reality of unemployment, particularly among young people. There is a double-whammy, if you will. On the one hand, students are being denied access to post-secondary education; on the other hand, they cannot work. In many cases they are being thrown on to the scrap heap of the welfare rolls or on unemployment insurance.

My time is coming to an end. I want to emphasize the serious nature of this crisis in our post-secondary education system. I call upon the federal Government to come to grips with this problem, to withdraw this regressive piece of legislation and to do everything in its power to ensure that the fundamental principle of universal accessibility to post-secondary education is a reality in Canada today.

• (1220)

Ms. Lynn McDonald (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to debate Bill C-12. As a former academic and as one who is strongly committed to having a vital university and college system, I am pleased to have an opportunity to make some remarks about the dreadful piece of legislation before us.

This Bill will introduce the six and five capping principle that the Liberal Government has already brought in so many other areas into post-secondary education. Of course, this process has already begun since this is retroactive legislation. In effect, the capping began on April 1, 1983.

Our critic on post-secondary education, the Hon. Member for New Westminster-Coquitlam (Ms. Jewett), has stated that we are in a state of crisis in post-secondary education. I suggest that this is not an exaggeration by any means.

Let me give some background to how this crisis arose. The system of financing for post-secondary education was changed in 1977. At that time the Government introduced block funding which meant that funds were no longer tied to the ostensible purposes to which they were to be devoted. Post-secondary education money could be spent elsewhere and in fact it was. The previous system had been, in effect, a fifty-fifty granting system. It was slightly more complicated than that

but worked out to a matching grant system overall. As a result of this change, the provinces diverted that money and began to spend less on post-secondary education. In the case of Ontario, the funding went down to only 30 per cent from 50 per cent. We know now that Ontario is planning draconian measures to cut back universities even more with the possible elimination of some universities. Only Nova Scotia kept to the 50 per cent level.

The federal Government is proposing its own cutbacks in this field which means that the universities have been hurt both by federal and provincial contributions. If the formula that had been established in 1977 was followed now, the increases for post-secondary education in 1983-84 would have been in the order of 11 per cent, over \$100 million. That is what is being lost with the passage of this Bill.

There are estimates from the Canadian Association of University Teachers that the entire system is underfunded by approximately \$250 million to \$400 million in essential services alone. The response of the universities to this crisis has been to increase their fees, reduce enrolment to make it harder to get into universities and increase the requirement of university admission. There is an enormous increase in fees, such as a 33 per cent increase in British Columbia.

Ontario previously had a principle of access by all qualified students to a university or college somewhere. Ontario is beginning to abandon that principle which means that some students will simply be left out. Both the provincial and federal governments are to blame for this deterioration and loss of expectation for our young people.

It has been estimated that 100,000 students have been turned away from Ontario post-secondary institutions in the last two years because of lack of space or lack of financial aid. Yet this comes at a time of crisis in employment for young people. The level of unemployment for young people is even greater than the high level of unemployment for all people in Canadian society at this time. Thus, at a time when job prospects are even worse for young people, they are finding that they cannot get into university or must pay absolutely crippling debts if they do. Since we are also seeing cutbacks in grant programs, young people must apply for loans. They must repay these loans but their job prospects after graduation are very bleak.

The irony is that we are still importing skilled people. We still lack skilled people who are trained in Canada for the job market.

Let me note that it is women who are being especially hurt by the cutbacks. In the last ten years, 95 per cent of the growth in full-time employment was from women. This is a group of people who had previously been very poorly represented in Canadian universities and colleges. Now that we are seeing women beginning to catch up and get out of the traditional job ghettos to receive the training for the kind of jobs they want in the labour market, they are being hit by these reductions in support for universities. Women will be left in these job ghettos just when we have begun to see women have equal opportunities. This is one of the extremely unfortu-