needed. We are getting closer and closer to the American way and we won't stand for it.

The New Democratic Party created medicare in this country. We are not going to stand by and watch this government destroy it. We are going to fight this every step of the way.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Ms. McLaughlin: I am dumbfounded, Mr. Speaker, to see the government take such short–sighted action as to reduce funding for post–secondary education. For example, the Canadian Association of University Teachers estimates that these cuts will amount to $3.1 billion.

Obviously all sensible Canadians consider our young people to be our most important resource to maintain a sound economy.

• (1710)

We must first invest in our young people and give them the training they need, if they are to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Education is the key to a prosperous and durable future.

I would like to mention one more aspect which concerns federal transfer payments to the provinces and the territories, Mr. Speaker, and it is a very important one. Cuts in government spending on health care and education will gradually create two societies: one rich and one poor. A few provinces and territories may be able to compensate for federal cutbacks, but it will be impossible for the poorest provinces and territories to do the same.

[*English*]

In those provinces that cannot make up the shortfall, services will suffer. Do we want to see a Canada where Newfoundlanders, for example, may have less adequate hospital facilities than Ontarians? Where Saskatchewanians will have higher tuitions, overcrowding and ill-equipped labs at their universities.

Where is the national standard here? Canada is about equality. It is about regional justice. We cannot continue to ask the poorest regions of this country to pay the cost of this government's economic mismanagement.

The creation of one Canada which is rich and another Canada which is poor is unacceptable and it must be stopped and it must be stopped now.

As we analyze the budget, we see once again that, like the goods and services tax, this budget is designed to take the most from those who have the least, from those who are the least able to speak up and have their voices heard.

These cuts, like so many that preceded them, are directed to those people in our society who need the help from all their fellow Canadians the most. Look at the hundreds of millions of dollars cut in the Canada Assistance Plan funding for Alberta, for B.C. and Ontario. The Canada Assistance Plan funds welfare, child care, and other programs to meet the needs of the poor.

The poor in these provinces need these programs just as much as the poor in other parts of the country. When you are poor, you are poor, and it does not matter where you live.

One has to wonder if any members of this government ever go and walk one of the city streets, because if they did they would see the increasing numbers of homeless in those streets. Yet, what does this government do? It cuts social housing expenditures. That is a crime.

If members of this government were to go to many of the communities across Canada they would see first hand what we should be doing. What we should be doing in this House is saying to aboriginal Canadians: "We are here to ensure that you have the power to control your own lives as first nations of this country, that you deserve our respect, and we are going to support you in your aims and objectives." What does this government do? It cuts Indian and Inuit programs by $50 million this year and another $50 million next year, just the way that last year this government cut aboriginal post–secondary education. A fact is a fact, Mr Speaker. This government's treatment of Canada's first nations is shameful.

I mentioned earlier probably the most heartless, the most insensitive and the most unnecessary cuts in this budget are the cuts to veterans, to the men and women who have served our country, cuts to their long term care and lodging, increasing the cost of every meal and increasing the cost of their rooms. This is a remarkably