

Established Programs Financing

Conservative Party as well. I have talked to many of them on this. However, the Hon. Member for Carleton-Charlotte did not seem to approve of that concept of accountability. Those to whom I have spoken have certainly said that they approved it. Many on the other side have told me that they approved it. While supporting very strongly this particular motion, we should not kid ourselves. It is an interim motion. It is there because unless we pass Motion No. 4 later today we do not have a genuine signal going out to all concerned that what we want and what we owe to the taxpayers of the country is accountability for the spending of federal funds on post-secondary education. We still have to get that. I hope Hon. Members on all sides will support the efforts of my colleagues and myself to bring this about through Motion No. 4.

Mr. Lyle S. Kristiansen (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to the amendment of the Hon. Member for Provencher (Mr. Epp). I simply say again that while we believe the amendment will help those of us who are currently being hurt, whether by Ottawa or by a provincial capital—and I most certainly know that students in post-secondary institutions in my own province are being hurt—to know whether we are being shafted, by how much and by whom—at least according to the federal Government and according to the Minister responsible—the amendment will not really tell us any more than what we know today. We will still not know whom we can believe or which level of government we can believe. We get different stories on that today. Even if the Minister tabled such reports in the House, there would still be issue taken with the findings of the reports by various provincial governments. It will not tell us whom we can believe or, with any degree of verifiability, who is shafting us and by how much. It certainly will not save our institutions from being destroyed and our students from being hurt.

Recently British Columbia was accused of not passing on federal funds by cutting provincial aid to post-secondary education by 6 per cent. The B.C. Minister of Education denied it and said that B.C. only cut the funds to universities by 5 per cent and to other post-secondary institutions by 3.5 per cent. We thus have an admission that the Government of British Columbia is not passing on the funds received from Ottawa, inadequate as they may be. We believe they are inadequate. We have a further admission from that Government that it has cut past levels of provincial funding to universities by 5 per cent and to other post-secondary institutions by 3.5 per cent respectively.

While the information which will arise from the amendment before us will be welcome, we really do not need it in order to find out what is happening in British Columbia at this point. At least we already know that that provincial Government is not passing on the money received from Ottawa for post-secondary education and in fact is cutting back on its own expenditures for those purposes from previous levels of funding.

We will support this amendment. Hopefully we will then be seen to have recognized, even to the satisfaction of the Conservative Party, that there is more to this issue than just the

fact that some provincial governments—and none of us have suggested all of them—are denying access to students to education to a greater amount than is necessitated by the level of federal funding made available. Hopefully, even the Conservatives will now recognize that we recognize the issue is broader. Perhaps they will look at it themselves and decide, despite their protestations on another amendment a few moments ago, to reconsider their view of that previous amendment and give it, as well as their own, some support.

We not only need to know what is happening to post-secondary education across Canada, we actually have to do something about it. It is not enough to know if we refuse to act. What I gather from statements made by representatives of the Conservative Party in the last few moments is, that just because some of the provincial governments in Canada may be doing an adequate job, that they will deny my constituents and the people who live in my province the right to equal access to education, because they only want to have a talk shop and know what the facts are, but do not actually want to do anything with the facts that are already admitted. To me, Mr. Speaker, that is totally irresponsible.

• (1610)

If Conservative Members want to have any hope of being able to speak for the people of British Columbia in any good conscience, they should not only support this amendment but also support the amendment which we dealt with just a few moments ago.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, I have a few words to say about this amendment. As has already been pointed out, it will not have the same effect as the amendment moved by the Hon. Member for New Westminster-Coquitlam (Ms. Jewett). That amendment would have had the effect of requiring that we make sure that the money transferred to provinces for the purposes of post-secondary education would actually be spent for those purposes. In the absence of the political will to accept that amendment—

Ms. Jewett: It has not been voted on yet.

Mr. Blaikie: It has not been voted on yet but I am making the assumption that the Government is not likely to change its mind between now and some time later this afternoon, although I hope that I am wrong. If that were to happen, government Members would need to have open minds, and I have not seen that demonstrated up until now.

As I think has been said before, this amendment as it stands comes very close to what was recommended by the special parliamentary task force on federal-provincial fiscal arrangements. Again, as on a couple of other occasions, I note with pleasure that recommendations which I had a hand in formulating as a member of that task force are coming into legislative form. I think this is one of the rare delights for a Member of Parliament. So many recommendations in which one participates collect dust and never see the light of day or are rejected by the Government.