

In other words, the Secretary of State is saying in his answer that the provinces inflated their estimates of cost, not just one province but all the provinces. I suggest that if the minister really believed that the place to deal with that was at meetings, either his meeting with ministers of education of the provinces or with his officials sitting down with the appropriate officials from the provinces and showing them where they had inflated their costs, that is the road he should have taken instead of giving some kind of rambunctious answer to an MP in this chamber.

The same day, the hon. member for Fundy-Royal (Mr. Fairweather) asked a question about the same matter. He suggested it might be an idea to have a federal-provincial meeting to try to delineate the goals of post-secondary education, or education in general. He asked the minister how he responded to that idea. The Secretary of State said: Mr. Speaker, I have responded sympathetically to that idea. I think it is a sensible and constructive idea. I have not at this point had any response to the idea from the provinces.

I do not believe for a moment that the provinces would not be prepared to discuss the whole question of education costs, particularly at the university and community college level, with the federal government. I am sure that they would be more than happy to discuss with the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Mr. Andras) what he and the federal government are doing to the provinces with the unilateral and cruel cutbacks in their expenditures for post-secondary education, having induced the provinces to get in the business of building and staffing community colleges, a large percentage of whose students consist of people whose expenses are being paid through manpower training grants.

These students are now being told that the federal government is cutting back on the number of seats it is prepared to pay for in the coming year. All the provinces have the unenviable task of deciding whether to cut back on the number of courses which they offer, which means telling a number of professors and teachers that they will no longer be employed, or meeting the increased cost out of their general revenues.

On May 17, the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands asked questions of the President of the Treasury Board. She asked him how he could justify the deliberate tabling of misleading estimates designed to show restraint in the federal government's spending program, when he knows that final payments under this program for 1976-77 will be much higher and that what he is trying to pass off as restraint is in fact a deferred payment of an expenditure mandated by law. The President of the Treasury Board replied in part:

We had, under the law, the privilege of postponing payment of certain debentures to show to all levels of government that we are serious about our restraint program and indirectly encourage them to do likewise. Those expenditures will be settled when the government deems it opportune.

I have dealt with the question of post-secondary education and the way the federal government has cut back in this field, unilaterally, because it is one more example in the growing list of programs sponsored originally and encouraged by the federal government of a program which is now being virtually destroyed, certainly being cut back drastically and unilaterally by the federal government. They are breaking the faith, they are reneging on promises

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which they made to the people of Canada and to the provinces over the years. Of course, it is two years away from the next federal election and Liberal governments have learned from experience that if they can show some form of repentance—

Mr. Saltsman: On their deathbed.

Mr. Orlikow:—they often have a miraculous recovery. This time it will need a miracle for them to recover, but that is what they will try. What they have done in hospital insurance and post-secondary education is, as I have tried to indicate in some detail, to prepare the poor people who have been supported under the provisions of the Canada Assistance Plan for what they propose to do to them. Some of us were here when that plan was brought in with such great fanfare. It was one more part of the Liberal program of providing total social security to meet the needs of the people of Canada, one more plank in that program of promises begun away back.

Mr. Saltsman: Thirty years ago.

Mr. Orlikow: No, back in 1919.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): The year the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) was born.

Mr. Orlikow: That bill, which was to be so important to Canadians, is going to disappear. In its place we will have a social services act which will take the place of the Canada Assistance Plan. It is going to provide a guaranteed income to all Canadians.

• (1750)

The provinces are not completely stupid, although the Prime Minister may often think so. How many times do the provinces have to be burned before they will recognize that they are dealing with a pyromaniac? Whether the governments of the provinces are Liberal, Conservative, NDP or Social Credit, they are beginning to ask questions. They are saying that this sounds great, and that the federal government is telling the public that it will have to look after, not only the people on welfare, the old and the needy, but also the working poor, but let the government give us some of the nitty-gritty and answer some of the small questions, like who is going to qualify and how much they will get. Are they going to get \$50 a week, are they going to get something near the poverty level, or is Ottawa going to pay 50 per cent or 60 per cent? I am speaking from memory, but I think I am not far wrong when I say that Newfoundland has an unemployment rate of 18 per cent. Newfoundland cannot pay 50 per cent.

Is the federal government going to be prepared to pay more, and if we are going into this program will the government come back in 1977, 1978 or 1981 and say that it has changed its mind and will no longer pay the 50 per cent or whatever it will have promised to pay? Will it pay only 20 per cent, 30 per cent, or 40 per cent?

We want to know these things before we get involved. Despite all the meetings of first ministers, of finance ministers and of health ministers, the provincial ministers still do not have the facts, and they are not going to get any more information from this government than the govern-