

In conclusion, Bill C-12 impacts very negatively both upon the institution itself, that is the college and the university, because of the \$100 million cutback per year and the new financing arrangement, and upon students, whether they are at the community college or university level. I ask the Government to come to its senses and realize that investing in education is the best investment it can make, far better than handouts to industries that are going under. That is what this Government has been doing for the last three years. I ask the Minister responsible for this Bill to read it again and to make substantive changes to it. I fully appreciate the difficulties that exist between the federal and provincial governments, but if we can do it with health care, we can do it with education. We can force the provinces to account for the moneys they spend on post-secondary education.

● (1210)

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to make a few comments today with respect to Bill C-12, an Act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act, 1977. The major purpose of the Bill is to cap federal contributions to post-secondary education at 6 per cent and 5 per cent. As other Members have noted, this capping is being done on a retroactive basis with the Bill taking effect on April 1, 1983.

In effect, what the Government has done through this capping process is unilaterally to break its contract with the provinces on the matter of funding. As Hon. Members are aware, the original formula for funding would have resulted in an increase in 1983-84 of over 11 per cent. Because of the federal Government's unilateral action in this Bill, what we see is effectively a loss to the provincial post-secondary education system of well over \$100 million.

There is no question that there are serious problems in the transfer and allocation of funds between the federal and provincial levels. In the Province of British Columbia, for example, despite a slight increase in federal funding for post-secondary education, the provincial Social Credit Government has savagely attacked post-secondary education and has cut in real terms the amount of money going to that sector.

At the same time as the provincial government is cutting in real terms its allocation of funds to post-secondary education, as my colleague from New Westminster-Coquitlam (Miss Jewett) has very clearly pointed out in this House on a number of occasions, we see clear evidence of a crisis in post-secondary education in Canada. Unquestionably the only appropriate response to this crisis is the establishment of a national task force that can look at the whole area of the bitter jurisdictional squabbles that often take place. That task force should include representatives of post-secondary education institutions as well as the students and staff involved. It is only with the development of such a task force that we can come to grips with this crisis in post-secondary education.

This crisis is having a particularly damaging impact on young people and on women. In my constituency of Burnaby, Simon Fraser University has recently been forced to increase

Established Programs Financing

tuition fees by 25 per cent. At the same time that tuition fees and the cost of living have gone up, the university has been forced to establish ceilings on enrolment. Finally, and in some ways most devastatingly for students who are poorer than others, there has been a definite shift in the student aid program. In many cases this means that students end their years of post-secondary education with debts of \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000 or more.

The net impact of these changes in post-secondary education is, unfortunately, to return to the days in which post-secondary education was a preserve of the elite. Only those young people wealthy enough to study were able to continue their education. This is at a time when perhaps more than ever we should be encouraging young people to continue post-secondary education. It is a time of rapid technological change, a time when the Canadian corporate sector has failed miserably to fund research and development. If we are to meet our targets and objectives for employment in the eighties and nineties, instead of cutting back on funding for post-secondary education as the federal Government is doing through this legislation, we should be expanding that funding.

As well, there are serious problems at the provincial level. Tuition fees will be increasing at Simon Fraser University by 25 per cent and at the University of British Columbia by 33 per cent next year. There are serious problems as well in this area of funding at the B.C. Institute of Technology and the Pacific Vocational Institute.

To add to the difficulties of a shortfall in funding, student aid and the increased cost of living as well as rising tuition fees, the unemployment difficulties for students in post-secondary education are devastating. For example, last summer over one-quarter of those post-secondary education students desperately trying to find work were unable to do so. With the failure of the economic system to allow young people to work and help fund their own education, it is the poorer students who are being denied access. The doors to further education are being slammed shut.

Canada already has the lowest participation rate in post-secondary education institutions of all nations in the OECD. My own Province of British Columbia, depending on how one uses the figures, is either eighth or ninth in the country. Regionally speaking, we are at the bottom of the heap when it comes to participation. There is no question that there are serious problems with respect to the manner in which federal funding is being transferred to provincial governments and then not being used at the provincial level. As I indicated, despite a slight increase in federal funding in British Columbia, the Social Credit Government has seen fit to slash its funding. We in this Party would be most sympathetic to improving mechanisms for accountability and oversight to ensure that federal Government funds which are designated for post-secondary education are in fact spent in the post-secondary education system.

At the B.C. Institute of Technology, to give another practical example of the implications of these cuts in funding, there has been a significant decrease in the number of lab hours