

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

the provincial budget is decreasing when it comes to post-secondary education and health care, and that is the West Coast Province of British Columbia. People in British Columbia are getting the short end of the stick because they are Canadians, and they are getting the short end of the stick in Canada because they are British Columbians.

When you consider the people who do not live in the lower mainland of British Columbia, they are getting even a shorter stick. For a young or an older person today to go and study at a university, a vocational institute or a technical institute, you have to pay \$6,000 to \$7,000 a year.

Considering the high levels of unemployment and the difficult times that so many British Columbia families are facing these days, there are literally hundreds and thousands of families now that can no longer afford to send members to study at universities, institutes, technical and vocational schools in the Province of British Columbia.

If you are from the central part of British Columbia you are getting the short end of the stick in B.C. If you are from B.C. you are getting the short end of the stick in Canada. If you are in Canada you are getting the short end of the stick compared with all the OECD countries.

What does that tell us about this country? What does it tell us about what we can expect in the future when West Germany, Japan, and even some of the major parts of the United States are investing heavily in what they see as their most important natural resource? Some parts of our Government think our most important national resources are codfish, coal, copper, or wheat. The most important natural resource, as we all know, is the people of Canada.

The Japanese, the Swiss, and Scandinavian countries figured that out long ago. Canadians, as far as our Government is concerned today, have not figured that out. The anti-intellectual and anti-education people in British Columbia do not even come close. The Government is short changing our youth in terms of the future and their ability to take their rightful place in the 21st century. In our information oriented society in which the economy is becoming increasingly competitive, we must have well-trained and well-educated people. We must spend more money on scientific research and development for future production, but the Government is not keeping up with our competitors in this area.

● (1140)

The Government's answer is to move this motion which effectively brings in closure on this Bill. It has closed off debate because it has heard enough criticism from members of the Opposition. I believe that this is probably the most important debate we have had or will have in the months to come in terms of the future of the country, but the Government's answer is to close off the debate because the heat has been turned up too high.

We in the Opposition say it is wrong for the Government to impose Bill C-96 that will take \$5.608 billion from post-

secondary education and health care. We do not want this legislation to proceed but the Government will no longer take the heat and will simply cut off debate and jam this legislation through. We say that this Bill is bad news for the future of Canada and Canadians.

Mr. Maurice Foster (Algoma): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak on what is essentially a closure motion by the Government. This motion to close debate on second reading of such an important Bill is totally irresponsible. This Bill touches the very fabric of our nation at a time when provincial Governments are facing tremendous responsibilities in dealing with a recession, especially in the outlying areas of our country.

It disturbs me that the Government has the gall to propose a cut-back of \$8 billion in post-secondary education and health contributions for the next four years. It signifies the extreme lack of awareness of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) and the Cabinet generally about the realities in our country.

In Ontario alone there will be cut-backs in funding for post-secondary education and health care at a time when the Ontario Government is considering the possibility of doing away with OHIP premiums in favour of a fairer general tax levy by which premiums would be based on the ability to pay rather than a flat rate.

It is hard to believe that the Government would impose such a Draconian measure on the provinces when much of our country is facing serious economic recession. When the Minister looks at the national gross figures for the years 1983 through 1985, he believes that the economy of the entire country is growing at the same rate as that in the "Golden Horseshoe" around Toronto. I suggest that the Minister should visit the Maritimes to see the impact of the Government's cut-backs on services and transfer payments, combined with new fees for ferry services.

Recently the people of Prince Edward Island spoke eloquently about the impact of the Government's \$8 billion cut-backs in transfer payments to the provinces. The Minister should go to northern Ontario to see the impact of the Government's policies on those resource areas of our country, including the forestry sector and the mining sector.

The impact of the Government's energy policy on Sault Ste. Marie, for example, is that we face lay-offs of some 800 people in the tube mill alone. We are just completing a new \$375 million tube mill but the Government's policy on energy is not only making the feasibility of that plant very questionable, the existing plant is being shut down.

Let us consider the over-all situation in the country. I just returned from the agricultural special task force hearings in western Canada where we were discussing the impact of the U.S. Farm Bill. That U.S. Farm Bill will have a greater impact on Canadian agriculture than any other piece of legislation that the U.S. Congress has passed. However, when the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) went to Washington to meet with the President a few months ago, not once, in that