

*Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act*

faced in terms of how to deal with a continuing deficit and a growing national debt, and apart from other such weighty matters, I think we should be clear about who and what are being effected by Bill C-96. It is difficult for any Member of the House to say that Bill C-96 over a period of time will not have a serious and drastic effect upon the post-secondary educational system. It cannot fail but to do so.

No less an important personage than the Chief Justice of Canada saw fit to raise the alarm on this particular issue. It is very unusual for someone from the judicial branch of Government to talk about public policy issues. Yet, Chief Justice Brian Dickson of the Supreme Court of Canada, in receiving an honorary degree from a university, felt that he had to say something. He said that Canada was on the verge of becoming a second-class nation because of tragic underfunding of universities by federal and provincial Governments. He also said that there are many people who feel that education is too important to be left to educators. That may be true, but it is also true that education is too important to be left in the hands of Ministers of Finance. Bill C-96 will have a serious and drastic effect over time on our post-secondary institutions of learning.

Are you aware, Mr. Speaker, that the proportion of the Gross National Product made available by government in Canada to universities and colleges is on the decline? I find it almost impossible to comprehend that at this time in our history, with competition in the field of technology and when demand for a highly educated population is increasing, that the amount of the GNP spent on post-secondary education is not even maintaining itself, but in fact is going down. At the same time, enrolment in universities and colleges is going up. Between 1978 and 1985 enrolment in universities went up by 27 per cent. In colleges the increase was even greater; it was up 35 per cent. How much more money over that same period of time went from Governments for core operations to post-secondary institutions? It was an increase of only 2.5 per cent. Is it any wonder the Chief Justice is alarmed? Every Member of Parliament ought to be alarmed. Is it any wonder that Bill C-96 is being delayed? It is not a question of mischief on the part of the Opposition; it is a question of great principle and it is a question of the assured future of the country. That is what is at stake.

We are facing accelerating technological changes. Young people of Canada need more training and more education to face growing challenges in the workplace. We are talking about a comprehensive free trade agreement with the Americans. Hon. Members opposite have said that it will be a great advantage for Canada because we will be able to compete face to face with the Americans and because we will have a bigger market within which to compete. They have said that we will have to do well and that we will excel. How can we excel and compete when we are serving our post-secondary educational institutions so badly? They are getting less of the GNP and getting only dribs and drabs in the way of increases for an enrolment that is going up year after year. No, Mr. Speaker, it

is strange, curious and illogical to cut contributions to post-secondary education.

● (1520)

Let me refer to what Mr. Ed Anderson, President of the Canadian Association of University Teachers, said with respect to Bill C-96 in this debate:

Proposed federal cuts to post-secondary education could place a university education beyond the reach of many students... Further slashes in university funding could spell hard times for higher education in Canada, resulting in higher tuition costs, program cuts, faculty reductions... The Federal and provincial governments have a moral obligation to give every student in the country at least the opportunity to attend university... Without an educated population, Canada's going to be hard pressed to cope with the rapid changes in our increasingly technological world.

I could not quote a better source than Mr. Ed Anderson of the Canadian Association of University Teachers on that particular point.

The Minister of Finance for the Province of Nova Scotia has also expressed alarm and dismay. He reported, after having sat down with the federal Government at a federal-provincial conference, that "every province made it clear that there is probably nothing more important to deliver to Canadians than health and education. By cutting health and education spending, the federal Government is running the risk of creating two levels of health and education in this country".

The well-to-do provinces, if they have enough conviction and belief in health and education may be able to find the wherewithal to make up for this loss, but what will the poorer provinces do? Is that really what we want, two systems of health and education in this country, one for the wealthy provinces and another one for the poor? That is what Bill C-96 will give us, Mr. Speaker.

I turn for a moment to the health care part of Bill C-96. At a conference on health care sponsored by *The Financial Post*, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp) when he was questioned about the effects of Bill C-96 whispered rather weakly—I do not blame him for whispering—that of course Bill C-96 would affect the accessibility and the affordability of health care programs in the country. He was embarrassed about it.

The Canadian Hospital Association has made it very clear to Parliament that if Bill C-96 passes it will mean a freeze in hospitals on new programs, new equipment and new developments for patient care. Is that what we want? I could not give my consent to a Bill that will do that. The Canadian Hospital Association sees Bill C-96 as having, in particular, an adverse effect on health care programs for older Canadians. Geriatric services are going to be affected at a time in Canada when demographics clearly point to the fact that we have an aging population. How does that make sense? It will also mean reduced funding for work that is being done in organ transplant programs. We know what is happening in that area. It is an exciting new horizon and possibility for the transplantation of such organs as the pancreas, the heart, kidneys and eyes.