

Borrowing Authority

Dick Wertheim, spokesman for Northern Telecom Ltd., said that the rhetoric which the minister used to announce the policy is dangerous because it could lull the public into thinking something is being done. The President of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, Gordon MacNabb, said about the minister's announcement that critical shortages of research talent may prevent Canada from achieving the goal of higher spending on research and development.

Responding to the federal government's recent announcement of a framework for achieving research and development spending of 1.5 per cent of the gross national product by 1985, Mr. MacNabb said:

—there aren't enough people in the physical sciences: chemistry, physics, engineering and computer science, for example.

As if it were not bad enough that the government has retreated from its commitment after its very late conversion to the idea that we must spend 1.5 per cent of our gross national product on research and development, we now have the news, from what I am certain are very reliable sources, that this government, in its desire to hold down government expenditures, is giving very serious consideration at the cabinet level to getting out, in the next few years, of the federal government's commitment to sharing the cost of post-secondary education with the provinces and giving notice very shortly to the provinces that it proposes to cut back and then to eliminate the cash expenditures it makes to post-secondary education.

According to what I consider to be authoritative sources, the government proposes to cut \$2 billion to \$3 billion from its funding for the established programs financing. Where do they propose to do that? They propose to reduce their contributions to post-secondary education to the provinces by \$1.5 billion. This will be a calamity for our post-secondary education. What does it mean to my province? I wish the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Axworthy) were here because, as a former university professor in Winnipeg, he knows the importance of universities to our province, as they are important to every province. To my province, it means a reduction, in the cash part of the secondary EPF which can be allocated to the universities in my province, to \$52 million. Of that \$52 million, about three quarters would be cut from the funding which the federal government now provides to the three universities in Manitoba, the University of Manitoba, The University of Winnipeg and Brandon University, and the other quarter would be cut from the funding for our community colleges, which play such an important part in the training and education of the young people in my province.

This decision by the federal government, if followed, would be a disaster for education in all parts of Canada. Enrolment at our universities has levelled off. The increases which we had every year, beginning in 1945, have levelled off as the population of Canada has stabilized.

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It may be that we need to change our educational system. It may be that we need to re-orient our universities. It may be that we need to change the direction of our community

colleges. But that is a decision which would have tremendous implications for the people of Canada. That is a decision which ought not to be made unilaterally by the federal government. That is a decision which ought not to be made just because the federal government believes it needs to control and reduce its expenditures. That is a decision which needs to be made after the closest and most careful consideration and in co-operation with the provinces and the universities and community colleges.

I want to close by urging the government to adopt the proposal made to it by the Association of Canadian Universities and Colleges and by the Canadian Association of University Teachers. The proposal made to the government was that before it embarks on this very dangerous course and before it makes the kind of unilateral decision which it seems to be moving toward in the field of post-secondary education, it should discuss these matters in detail and with a great deal of care with the provinces and with the universities and community colleges.

I urge the government to adopt the proposal it has made for the establishment of a royal commission to look in a real way at the problems of post-secondary education which are so important to the people of this country.

Mr. F. Oberle (Prince George-Peace River): Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank all my friends and colleagues who have waited here all night for this moment to listen to me conclude the debate for today. I have but ten minutes left, and I hope in those ten minutes to give a brief outline of what I will be saying about this piece of legislation tomorrow. I am glad I have this opportunity.

Bill C-59 is not a very big bill. I could read it into the record, but I will not. It has four paragraphs. One paragraph identifies Her Majesty, and I hope she has not read this bill because it is an insult to her. The other paragraph identifies the bill, which is known as the "Borrowing Authority Act, 1982", and then there are two more paragraphs which ask us to authorize the government to borrow fourteen thousand million dollars which it no longer has and has to borrow from a foreign source. What offends me about the bill too is that juicy little indication that this money may be borrowed in a currency other than that of Canada. Of course, it would have to be repaid in that other currency as well.

If I were to stand in this House to vote for this bill, I am sure my knees would buckle and give out from under me. I know if I came home and if my wife had watched me on television standing up to vote for this bill, she would probably rewrite her will. If I looked at myself in the mirror, I am sure it would explode.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Collenette: It is a wonder it has not already done so.

Mr. Oberle: I am sure my children would walk out and never speak to me again.