

On Wednesday the Secretary of State also referred to the constitutional position and since it was a rather confusing sentence I should not try to interpret it. He said, as reported at page 721 of *Hansard*:

—I remind the Hon. Member that the Canadian Constitution does not empower Parliament to directly force upon the Provinces any stiff conditions as to the use that should be made of funds in the educational sector.

There is a very long history in this country, going back to the post-World War I days when the first Technical and Vocational Assistance Act was passed, of the federal Government in fact directing funds to certain specific educational activities, usually with conditions attached. In fact, there was more direct funding of that nature in the years up to 1958 than there has been since. There never was a constitutional challenge or a challenge in the courts. Of course, there will be political problems in the case of Mr. Duplessis. Even the late Premier of Quebec, Maurice Duplessis, never challenged federal involvement in higher education in the courts.

Therefore, I am led to believe that perhaps the Government is saying it is a constitutional problem as a means of not doing anything about it. Incidentally, the Constitution makes it very clear that the provincial legislatures have authority for education "in and for the province". That is the exact wording. That is why primary and secondary education are considered to be in and for the province. But when we are talking about colleges and university education, primarily university education, and when we see the flow of people across the country, we realize that that level of education is for the nation and indeed the international community.

Since most Canadians have realized this over the years there have not been great court cases where the federal Government has contributed money in various instances. Indeed, until 1977 federal Government transfers were specifically for post-secondary education and they had to be audited. I am sorry that the Secretary of State is not here because I dislike trying to understand what someone means when they cannot help me. The fact is that I do not like this phony argument being perpetuated.

I have talked at length on this matter because I think it is the most important issue next to unemployment, and indeed it is linked with unemployment to some extent and has been for the last several years. It is getting to the point that if we do not do something soon irreparable damage will be done to the universities and colleges of this country.

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Kingston and the Islands): Mr. Speaker, this morning I listened with dismay to the Minister of State for Finance (Mr. MacLaren) when, in an almost offhand way, he presented the Government's case for Bill C-12. He was not apologetic or defensive. He simply did not seem to care about the consequences of this Bill.

He was very enthusiastic about the title of the Bill and the fact that it changes the name of the Act from the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act, 1977 to the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Federal Post-Secondary Education and Health

Established Programs Financing

Contributions Act, 1977. It is as if he thought that somehow described what the Bill is doing.

The Minister indicated that a change in federal-provincial fiscal arrangements is embodied in the Bill. I may say that it is a unilateral change. Indeed, if one can decipher that change, as it is couched in these terms. Let me quote from Clause 7 of the Bill which is the key clause. It reads:

(2) For the purposes of paragraphs 19(1)(b), 21(1)(e) and 27(3)(b), the escalator for a fiscal year is the cube root of a fraction of which

(a) the numerator is the per capita gross national product for the calendar year ending immediately preceding the calendar year ending in the fiscal year; and

(b) the denominator is the per capita gross national product for the fourth calendar year immediately preceding the calendar year ending in the fiscal year.

(3) For the purposes of paragraph 19(2)(b).

(a) the escalator for a fiscal year that ends before April 1, 1983 or begins after March 31, 1985 is the cube root of a fraction of which—

And it goes on and on.

Mr. Bosley: Explain it both languages!

Miss MacDonald: The Hon. Member for Don Valley West (Mr. Bosley) asks me to interpret that in either of the two official languages. I cannot interpret it. It sounds like a lot of gobbledegook and I am not sure that anyone in even the most advanced computer programs could interpret it. However, I do know its significance. It means a \$380 million tax grab by the federal Government over the years 1983-84 and 1984-85. It is a federal tax grab from the funding that would otherwise go to post-secondary education. That is what this Bill is all about.

This morning the Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn) mentioned the figure of \$260 million. That is what it will be in the fiscal year 1984-85. It already is \$118 million in the fiscal year 1983-84.

I said that the Minister addressed this Bill in a very offhand way, as if it were of no consequence. I would say that the consequences may not readily be discernible to the federal Government, but to the thousands of young Canadians in post-secondary institutions of this country and to the hundreds of people who staff our community colleges and universities, the consequences are very clear. In fact, they are frightening.

Like the Member for New Westminster-Coquitlam (Mr. Jewett), I was surprised that the Secretary of State (Mr. Joyal), who is probably the Minister with the primary responsibility in the field of post-secondary education funding, is not in the House today. I wonder why he was not here when this Bill was being presented since it so directly concerns funding which is supplied by his Department. Perhaps he might have felt inclined to stand up and protest what is going on. At least, I hope that is what he would have done.

● (1450)

The Hon. Member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn), in his very eloquent address this morning, said that what we are dealing with here is a question of priorities. Indeed it is. We in this Party know at a time of restraint that there are not hundreds of millions of dollars floating around to be spent in an undisciplined way. You have to determine which things are