

The Budget—Mr. Stafford

Our own nationals are being denied the right to an education in their chosen profession of medicine, for which there is an ever-increasing need, merely because the government directly or indirectly has become reliant upon foreign personnel to fill our medical manpower needs and has not increased and is not planning to increase our medical school output except to a small, marginal extent. We are directly and covertly contravening the spirit and the word of the UN report as it pertains to the brain drain of manpower, and the backlash effect in our own country is that our young college graduates are being, and will continue to be, denied a professional education in the field of medicine.

There is another aspect to this question of the medical brain drain which has not received adequate attention. This was brought to the attention of the World Medical Association by an American physician who pointed out that it is utterly inconceivable that the poor nations will continue to subsidize medically the richest nations, and that it is only a matter of time before strong efforts will be made to dam these rivers of technical skill flowing toward the developed western world. India, Turkey and Iran have already taken some positive steps in this direction and other countries will undoubtedly follow suit, as indeed they should. Because we have now become dependent on a continuing outside supply of physicians, the medical manpower shortage in Canada will assume potentially disastrous proportions should this source of medical manpower be withdrawn. The shortcomings of our medical education program will become painfully apparent.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I can only say it is indeed unfortunate that we have become so dependent on foreign medical graduates to meet our annual manpower need in medicine and that this gain of ours is made at the very serious expense of the developing nations who have limited medical manpower to begin with. I have drawn attention to the United Nations report, its comments and recommendations with respect to this problem. I must also add that this dependency on foreign medical graduates has denied many of our own students their right to an education in medicine because we have not increased our medical school facilities so that we can be at least self-sufficient.

• (4:20 p.m.)

Finally, I have drawn attention to the potentially disastrous position in which we
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may find ourselves if the present supply of foreign medical graduates is no longer available. I feel this whole area of medical manpower should be reconsidered by the minister and his provincial counterparts in light of the recommendations contained in the United Nations report No. 2417 and also because of the deleterious effect that our reliance on foreign medical graduates has had on our own medical school aspirants.

It is a matter of concern to me that the university in my area, namely the University of Western Ontario, is able to accept 85 applicants only this year out of the 700 applications which were received. It is a matter of equal concern that approximately 60 per cent of new physicians entering the Canadian medical scene last year were foreign medical graduates, and that this 60 per cent is the means by which the government has planned to fill our medical manpower needs rather than educating our own citizens.

Mr. W. M. Howe (Wellington-Grey): Mr. Speaker, I should like to take this opportunity of congratulating the hon. member for Elgin (Mr. Stafford) for his timely comments on a very important and current problem facing the nation in connection with staffing our medical and professional services. The other night I watched a United States program that pinpointed the fact the United States was having the same problem with regard to the scarcity of medical assistants. In Canada, we realize that if it were not for the brain drain from some of the underdeveloped countries we would have no medical help at all.

I should like to say a few words primarily about the budget, which to me is a very mediocre document. I have been here for a number of years, and usually on budget night the galleries of the House are filled and the business and economic community wait for the budget with bated breath. But the budget of 1970 caused hardly a ripple, and this at a time when there was a necessity for some government action to be taken to deal with conditions in our country which have brought about the highest taxes we have ever had, the highest interest rates, the highest unemployment level for many years, the highest wheat surplus in western Canada and the highest cost of living.

During the last election campaign we were often told that the government program was one of "no promises". This has now changed to "no action". The only redeeming factor in the budget, I feel, was the one referred to by the hon. member for Red Deer (Mr. Thomp-