

going to create. Give them a chance to compete with other young people in the world in the 1980s and 1990s.

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, the problem with what the Government is doing I think can best be described if I were to start by saying that I doubt very much if it has fully analysed the potential danger of the EPF cuts. I have difficulty believing that even the Government would knowingly take steps the end result of which might be the undermining of both the post-secondary educational system and the universality of our health care programs. Yet as you start to analyse the impact of a reduction in the rate of increase and juxtapose that with increases in other areas, you begin to wonder whether the Government has its priorities straight.

I want to deal primarily with the impact on the Province of Ontario. I want to set the stage by putting to the House two statements which I believe sum up the view I would like to leave with whoever happens to hear these words. What we have here is a question of priorities. The future of medicare and higher education is being placed behind the best interests of oil companies, investors, banks and, I might add, even such things as new uniforms for the military. The Department of Defence will see an increase over the course of the next five years in its expenditure level of some 41 per cent. At the same time health care will see an increase of only 14 per cent. I see the Minister sitting here. We will of course at some point no doubt have a difference of opinion on this, but to the best of my knowledge what I am saying is as accurate as I can ascertain it to be.

Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre): They are wrong.

Mr. Deans: The second point I want to leave with whoever happens to think about this is that medicare and post-secondary education are already in a financial bind. I do not think anyone can deny that access to post-secondary education has been severely limited over the last few years by actions taken both here in Ottawa and in the various provinces. Opportunities for the young of Canada to continue through the post-secondary educational system and achieve an education from which we will all benefit in one way or another have become considerably lessened. Their ability to obtain the necessary funds through grants, bursaries or loans has been severely inhibited, as has their opportunity to find employment. Notwithstanding the statements the Government might make about its efforts in that regard, employment opportunities for young people which will enable them to earn the necessary funds to continue with their education at the post-secondary level have also been inhibited to a large extent. I am not going to blame the Government for that particular problem, it just happens to be a fact of life. There simply are not the same number of jobs available on a part-time or short-term basis this year as there were 10 years ago. That means those who do not happen to have wealthy parents or come from the upper 10 per cent or 15 per cent of income earners in

Canada will find it much more difficult to get through the post-secondary educational system.

Not only that, the quality of education has also deteriorated. This is not because of any lack of desire on the part of those who run the universities, or because of a lack of expertise on the part of those who do the lecturing. It is not because of anything that is the fault of the universities themselves, but because their budgets have had to be cut by virtue of the restrictions placed on them. That has resulted in a deteriorating plant and deteriorating research capability. Universities without proper plant and research capabilities will not be able to keep pace with the changing times. The end result will be that, while there will still be universities, they will not be of a standard sufficient to maintain the level of excellence this country expects of them.

We are losing ground in our ability to provide top level education at the post-secondary level for the youth of Canada when measured against the capacity of other countries to do so. I make that statement without trying to leave the impression that that is true in every classroom, every lecture room, in every part of every university. I make it as a general observation about what is going on, and I contend it is most certainly true. We are unable to maintain the excellent level of education we have been developing since the early part of the 1950s. That, to all intents and purposes, was when universal access to post-secondary education became a much more acceptable practice to be pursued.

I put it to the Minister that the decrease in the rate of increase, which is what we are talking about, in the funds to be made available to the provinces for post-secondary education will only increase the speed, if you will, of the downward trend which has already begun. We cannot afford that. Yet it is, quite frankly, the risk we run by allowing this situation to occur, and it will bear terrible consequences in the future. If we are to be successful as a nation it will only be because our post-secondary education is of a standard of excellence second to none and if, as a result, we are able to derive the economic benefit which flows from that level of educational standing.

I therefore make the point that the Government, in setting its priorities, clearly should have understood this. It is true of all Governments, not just this Government but provincial Governments as well. The Government must set its priorities with a clear understanding and recognition that the future of Canada rests more in developing the level of excellence of the educational system than it does by developing any other single aspect of our economic or social life. I therefore say to the Government that it is vitally important that education be, if not the number one priority, and we all set our priorities differently from time to time and I am prepared to concede that, a priority rating near if not at the top in government thinking.

● (1300)

Having said that I turn to the second victim of this Government's lack of proper priority setting, the health care system. I