

Supply

job interviews. A program as successful as this surely should have been considered to be continued.

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Here in Ontario at Laurentian University, which has an undergraduate population of about 3,000, last year 1,000 students were placed in casual, part-time, full-time or summer jobs through these employment centres on campus. The administrators as well as managers and workers at the employment centres can easily vouch for the fact that they are, indeed, very busy.

However, senior officials from Canada Employment Centres have maintained that there is no national strategy for the closures and that each centre is looked at individually. In other words, I guess if you are lucky your centre stays open, and if you are unlucky or at the whim of someone—we do not seem to have any criteria—then the centres are closed.

It becomes very clear what is happening across the country, and it is nothing short of a silent war of attrition waged against one of the most essential services that students still have on their campuses. As far as I know—subject to correction by whoever in the House, perhaps the minister—there has been no public process of discussion or consultation with the student bodies.

We are now at the time of year when students have finished their classes for a few months, and their employment prospects for the summer of 1991 will most likely be worse than they were in 1990. The government intends to spend an additional \$3 million on the Challenge program this year, but this is only an increase of 2.1 per cent above last year's allocation. That does not even keep up with the rate of inflation, the cost of living that we have from year to year. What we have is a decline in the amount of real dollars that are being put into this particular program.

How many students are we to expect will benefit from these additional funds? Given the severity of the recession, one would think that the minister would have taken additional measures to increase employment opportunities for students this summer. It would have been, in my opinion, a very logical step.

Over the years since this government has come to power, it has prided itself on its so-called "sacred trust". Among the sacred trusts of this government and of this country, I would surely include our youth. The record shows a disturbing lack of commitment to our youth and

the other sacred trust that the Prime Minister has referred to many times in the past.

I quote Jane Arnold, chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students who said: "Students represent Canada's single most important investment in the future, our ability to compete and to prosper." It was thus extremely shortsighted of the government to take away, in a manner of speaking, our youths' ability to compete and to contribute in the future.

We are short-changing the youth of today for the sake of saving a few measly dollars. They are truly our investment in the future, and we are turning our backs on them if we cut these programs and refuse to recognize that there is a great problem in student unemployment.

The Minister of Finance in his last budget announced an extension of the two-year freeze to five years to federal transfer of payments to universities and colleges. This represents a \$775 million loss for post-secondary education in 1992-93.

Over that five-year period, that is 1991 to 1995, the government will have cut a total of \$3.8 billion. That is not a small sum as it is the equivalent of the combined operating budgets of universities in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. It is close to \$4 billion. That is a shame.

In the words of Professor Bob Kerr, president of the Association of University Teachers: "Canada's system of post-secondary education is hovering on the brink of bankruptcy."

What the government does not seem to link with its commitment to Canadians of jobs, jobs, jobs is the fact that these cuts are the equivalent of the loss of many, many jobs on campuses across Canada: jobs for professors, support staff, maintenance workers and administrators in the cities and towns where there are universities or colleges. This includes my riding of Welland—St. Catharines—Thorold where we have Brock University and Niagara College. The opportunities lost for employment are truly significant, and we in our particular area but right across Canada are really feeling the pinch.

I agree with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada which states: "Canada's foremost assets in the future will be its human rather than its natural resources". Lack of support for universities, combined with lack of support for knowledge intensive industries, may prove in fact to be the most damaging effect of the Mulroney government's preoccupation with