

field of post-secondary education. I intend to address most of my remarks to the particular problems being encountered by universities. I suppose it is largely because of the fact that until eight months ago I was a member of the faculty of the history department of Brandon University and I know that situation the best.

This crisis, of course, has been caused by two or three basic factors. First of all, the federal Government in days gone by has encouraged the expansion of post-secondary educational facilities, requiring, of course, that the provinces be a part of that particular expansion procedure. Unfortunately, as the federal Government has been wont to do in the past—it seems to me too often—it has initiated programs and then, for a variety of reasons, decided to withdraw them, at least in part, from the field, having left the responsibility for maintaining those programs with the provinces. Unfortunately, in doing that, it has not only financially embarrassed many of the provinces of Canada, but I believe it has very much augmented the financial disparity which is so much a part of Canadian history, and which of course comes as a result of various economic resources within the several provinces throughout the country.

One of the results of this change in attitude on the part of the federal Government is that the poorer provinces remain in a less equal position in terms of providing post-secondary education to their citizens. In addition to that problem, of course, we have seen, tragically so, in the last couple of years a very serious rise in the problems of youth unemployment. Many young people have turned to university education, at least in part because they have not been able to find employment after they have completed their secondary education. As a result of these young people returning to the universities and other post-secondary institutions, there has been a very dramatic increase in enrolment, of which all of us are aware.

Brandon University, for example, has never had the same enrolment statistics as it has now. Enrolment has never been as high. The Dean of Science of the University of Manitoba is quoted in a recent newspaper article as saying that the institution is full to capacity, “we have no more place to put the students”. In addition to that problem, of course, we have the impact of inflation, which means that the universities have in fact, as has been said by other speakers, a reduced capacity to purchase much needed new equipment and, as a case in point, library resources.

With respect to libraries, those people who are familiar with the cost of books know that the average price of a book purchased by a university library has more than doubled in recent months. In addition, because of larger class enrolment, the need for reading material has increased as well. At one time it was common practice for the larger institutions to purchase multiple copies of standard reference items, perhaps 5, and in some cases even 10 copies. Now the same university libraries are being restricted to the point where they can purchase only one or two. The result is a tremendous burden upon the students. Unfortunately, in my opinion, the result has been, at least to some degree, a deterioration in the quality of

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instruction within our post-secondary institutions. It is very difficult, as a professor, for example, to require students in a large class to research topics, knowing full well that the resources which they need to complete their research are not available in adequate numbers in the local library. Therefore, we have the combination of large classes, which in itself seems to lead to a diminishing quality of education, and we have, in some cases, cancelled classes because of the inability of the university to provide sufficient instructors. We have an inability on the part of universities to meet new demands. Again, I think of Brandon University in the field of computer science where it became necessary, over the last couple of years, to keep the facility open literally all night so that students could get access to computers. One of the byproducts was a tremendous amount of rivalry, sometimes even minor conflicts among students who are compelled out of necessity to be very utilitarian in seeking computer time.

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Faculties are frustrated. They are anxious to provide a quality education. They take their responsibility very seriously and are experts in their own field. They are dedicated public servants. But they are frustrated because of, again, the lack of resources, which often means they are not able to use up-to-date equipment, especially in the field of science, to instruct their students.

This is particularly ironic and I think tragic, Mr. Speaker, because the crisis in post-secondary education has come at an exceedingly inopportune time. I have already mentioned the unacceptably high unemployment among youth. In fact, many of them have been seeking the opportunity to enrol in the university of their choice in order to better their chances for employment. As university students and those close to universities know, including parents, there are many universities which have restricted admission simply because of their inability to provide for those students. This is occurring in fields where it has not been the case before, and it has very disappointing results for those students who would have pursued an education in that field.

During my recent years of teaching at Brandon University, I noticed a new phenomenon which excited me greatly. Many older people were seeking the opportunity of acquiring the university education which was denied them at an earlier stage in their life. Some of the most interesting students I had in the last three to four years were people in their sixties, sometimes seventies, who came to university after retirement and were very excited about the opportunity to fulfil a life long desire to secure post-secondary education. They were not always anxious to achieve a degree, but they were very anxious to learn. They added a great deal to my class and I think a great deal to the so-called generation gap. Students of the age of 18 or 19 had an opportunity to listen to people in their sixties who were talking about life experiences. Therefore we moved very quickly from discussions based on theory into very real terms as there was a sharing of information among students of different ages. Unfortunately, if we are going to be faced with restricted involvement and huge classes which discourage par-