

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

given Bill C-96 and other actions of the Conservative Government, that may be inevitable over the very near future.

It is important that people like Mr. Justice Dickson speak out. Although his statements met with some criticism, if one looks at the merits of what he had to say, one finds he made a lot of sense. People suggest that judges should not speak out; but in my view, and this is a personal view, when matters are so fundamental as post-secondary education, there is a role for the judiciary to play.

My question to the Hon. Member is with respect to a statement made by Mr. Justice Hall, another judge who reviewed health care in Canada a few short years ago. He said there were fundamental needs, like education, which Canadians could meet collectively and pay through taxes. In effect, concerning post-secondary education and health care, he said there is a sacred trust and that, if necessary, taxes should be increased to maintain a particular level.

I would like the Hon. Member to share his views and he has expressed them with respect to post-secondary education. In his community of Windsor, what impact will there be as a result of a cut-back in the level of financing for health services?

Mr. McCurdy: Mr. Speaker, I gather there are a number of questions contained in the comments by the Hon. Member. Obviously, we are faced with severe problems with respect to hospital equipment in Windsor. There is at present a controversy in Windsor over whether there will be sufficiently adequate funds to provide for an addition to one of the local hospitals. I would like to go back to the issue of comparison of the university system in Canada versus that of the United States. The fact is that there has been an erosion of the quality of the funding provided to universities in this country over too long a period of time. Let me just cite what has happened within a relatively recent period, through the last two years. I bring this to the Hon. Member's attention because I want to make another point.

First of all let me ask, are we losing researchers from our universities at an increasing rate because of under-funding of the universities' basic operating requirements and because researchers are inadequately funded? As President Wright of Waterloo said, if MIT was being funded at the rate the University of Waterloo was being funded, then it would probably not be, by any measure, a first-class institution.

In the period 1983-84 to 1985-86, the biggest increase in post-secondary funding provided to universities was in Ontario, at a rate of 13.1 per cent. The lowest was in British Columbia, where there was a decrease of 9.7 per cent. However, when one looks to the United States, to Michigan, which is comparable to Ontario, one finds an increase of 26 per cent. With respect to the State of Alabama one sees that over that period of time university funding was increased by 53 per cent in that state. The University of Alabama receives a per student grant which is five times greater than the per student grant provided in Ontario.

• (1220)

The Hon. Member must also know, as I mentioned parenthetically, that the University of Toronto is really the only university in the country which can be considered to be first-rate, by international judgment. Alabama is not exactly the focus of liberalism and universal opportunity, yet it receives five times more than the per student grant received in Ontario. Our system is taking a headlong plunge, not to second-rate but to third-rate. The Government is making a contribution to that plunge.

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ with my hon. colleague. I do not believe it is fair to compare our post-secondary system to the one in place in the United States. I suppose one can look at the per capita funding from the state Government or from the federal Government. However, my friend knows very well that in terms of equality of opportunity there is absolutely no comparison between Canada and the United States. I am speaking of whether each American from coast to coast has an equal opportunity to post-secondary education. In Canada, students pay a tuition fee of sorts which is a very small part of the actual cost of running our universities.

I had the pleasure of having several interns from Michigan work in my office over the last three to four weeks. They pointed out to me the cost to the student of post-secondary education in Michigan, which is similar to other states in the United States, where post-secondary education is becoming something that is only available to the rich.

I would like my friend to comment on the equality of opportunity. As Mr. Justice Dickson put it, the equality of opportunity goes to the very root of Canadian values in that we believe very strongly that one should not have to have considerable sums of money, or be born into a wealthy family, before one has the opportunity to a high quality post-secondary education. Will my hon. friend comment with respect to his research into post-secondary education in the United States in terms of whether the equality of opportunity comes anywhere close to the opportunity which exists in Canada for young people?

Mr. McCurdy: Mr. Speaker, I think it is about time we set some Hon. Members straight. The participation rate in Canada in post-secondary education is 16 per cent. The participation rate in Michigan is 40 per cent. In the State of California it is 60 per cent. The University of Michigan is the most expensive institution in Michigan. The average tuition fee in states such as Michigan, New York, California, and increasingly more so in the South, does not exceed, on average, our own. The tuition fees are highest among private institutions and some of the very large multi-function universities. So the participation rate in the United States is still higher than it is in Canada.

With respect to research and operational costs, first, all research in universities in the United States is funded by the federal Government through the granting agencies there.