

program that already increases the bias against the ability of the very poor and low income people to obtain training. It concerns increasing the opportunity for all classes of young people to have access to a good university and college system.

The Hon. Member for York South—Weston earlier lauded the Canadian post-secondary system as being one of the best in the world. He said that it is possible to go to some kind of post-secondary institution anywhere in the country. It is true that we have universal accessibility to a second-rate university system that will be made worse by the action of the Government, as it was made worse by the failures of the previous Liberal Government. A youth policy must attend to accessibility and quality of the post-secondary system. One does not begin developing a youth policy by cutting back the federal commitment to a system that is so important to our future.

During the hearings in the legislative committee on Bill C-96, one might have thought that there would be someone with responsibility and concern for the post-secondary system who would have supported this idea that we really should cut the federal contribution to post-secondary education and health because it will accomplish something that will benefit youth and enhance our efforts in improving the future economic status of this country. However, when one looks through what was said in the committee, one finds just the opposite. For example, the Canadian Teachers' Federation stated:

Adequately funded post-secondary institutions are absolutely vital to Canada's social, economic and cultural development.

To cut back on the national commitment to the funding of post-secondary education will short change future generations of young people whose education will suffer as a result . . . Canada's ability to survive and prosper in more and more competitive world markets will be impaired.

Did the Canadian Union of Public Employees rush in to suggest that EPF cuts will benefit our youth and Canada's economic future? They said:

Every day our members experience the cruel effects of cutbacks and underfunding. They are the people who are underpaid and overworked, and they are the people who are not being allowed to do a good job because of underfunding.

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada submitted a brief to the committee. They state:

We are opposed to this Bill because it may lead to a further erosion of the financial base of universities. We believe that such a consequence would be detrimental to the interests of Canada.

They go on to say:

Bill C-96 is a dangerous piece of legislation.

Indeed it is. Did the Government receive support from the Association of Canadian Community Colleges? No. They see a threat to their continued value as a means of access to opportunity for young people.

The Canadian Association of University Teachers is a group that represents people who have the capacity to analyse and reach reasonable conclusions about the appropriateness of legislation. They certainly would be expected to see the

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

tremendous value in Bill C-96 which motivates the Government to bring it before the House. What do they say? "Funding cuts did not occur over the past decade because policy-makers at either level of Government were concerned with quality; they were made because Government Leaders decided to increase spending money on buying stocks in oil companies, on bailing out inefficient banks, on building under-used airports and on refurbishing Ministers' offices". Calling attention, simultaneously, Mr. Speaker, to the tremendous commitment of the previous level of Government and how much better it was than the present Government! Ha!

• (1210)

And then, from the Canadian Federation of Students:

Limiting the growth of EPF transfers to the provinces as outlined in Bill C-96 will compound the underfunding problems which have become evident at post-secondary institutions across the country.

But if they had any doubt whatever about the critical stupidity of this legislation and how dangerous this legislation is, how inconsistent with all the pronouncements of Government this legislation is, how it threatens the future of not only our youth but also our economy, then go to the unusual statement made by a Justice of the Supreme Court who departed from practice because the issue was so important. Mr. Justice Dickson said:

Let me speak first to Governments, provincial and federal. Please do not choke off the funding of universities. Canada must have good universities with outstanding teachers and world class research facilities. Second funding of universities will inevitably lead to second-class teachers, second-class students and, ultimately, second-class nation.

Two consecutive Governments have been committed to a second-class post-secondary system in this country and it is about time that this process was called to a halt in the interests of our nation's future, in the interests not only of our human resources but also of our youth.

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the concerns raised by my hon. colleague. As I indicated earlier, this particular caucus, this Liberal caucus, shares in the profound concern regarding Bill C-96.

I note that the Hon. Member also referred to statements made by Mr. Justice Dickson, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, who has, over the years, expressed very serious concerns about the level of post-secondary education financing in Canada. The Hon. Member also referred to statements I made about the levels of health care and post-secondary education being second to none in the world. I am sure that he does not disagree with me when I say that we do have the finest post-secondary education system anywhere in the world, but that it is being threatened by actions at various levels of government and that Bill C-96 is one such threat. However, at this particular point in time, notwithstanding the desperate lack of funding, we still have an educational system that we can be proud of. We must maintain that standing. I would not go so far as to say that our post-secondary education has been rendered second class yet; but,