

Established Programs Financing

am sorry to say, the Minister or Ministers—and the reason I say “Minister or Ministers” is that it is difficult to know who really does have responsibility for education—lost out, and the money which should have gone, had the contract not been broken, to the funding of post-secondary education went instead to the Minister of Employment and Immigration for certain specific employment programs.

It is not that one does not wish to see employment programs strengthened. One wonders, however, how deep was the commitment, and is the commitment today, of the federal Government to the crisis which has been taking place, and which is deepening, in our university and college system throughout this country.

On March 15, 1983 I made a statement in the House, Mr. Speaker, almost a year ago, noting that by this proposed six and fiving of post-secondary education funding the federal Government is, and I quote:

—tightening the noose on post-secondary education in Canada—

It is another illustration of the Government's shortsightedness—cutting funds to the very institutions most vital to our economic recovery, to research and development, and to the training of a highly skilled Canadian work force.

Canadian colleges and universities have been subjected to severe financial cutbacks for the past ten years, while student enrolment, due to severe unemployment, has increased. Canadian youth, unemployed at a rate of 22.5 per cent, are not only denied jobs but are now denied access to a decent education.

The federal Government has abdicated its responsibility to foster educational goals, as outlined two years ago by the then Secretary of State, now the Minister of Communications (Mr. Fox). The federal Government cries for greater accountability in funding education, but offers no concrete proposals to achieve this. Indeed, in dropping its fiscal transfers to the six and five formula, it robs the universities and colleges of \$102 million for the coming year, and has given no indication of how this money will be spent.

The New Democratic Party calls on the Government to engage in urgent negotiations with the Provinces, universities and colleges, to restructure the current system of funding of post-secondary education before irreparable damage is done to the universities and colleges of Canada.

That was March 15, 1983. The Government has done nothing since that time. It did not call a meeting, as I as well as other Members of Parliament suggested, not only of the two levels of government but of representatives of the institutions concerned, both teaching faculties and students. It did not make any attempt to work out a more adequate funding formula, one in which accountability was more realistic. Once the Government had decided to impose six and five, it created a hiatus; or to put it another way, it created a period of time in which this kind of study could have been done. Once the colleges and universities were six and five, it left a year and a half in which this kind of analysis could have been undertaken jointly with the provinces, with representatives of the institutions concerned and with representatives of their teaching faculties, staff and students. It was a golden opportunity for the federal Government to have entered into these kinds of discussions. Yet absolutely nothing was done and the crisis has simply deepened.

One of the reasons, perhaps, that nothing was done—because I cannot believe that the federal Government was totally unaware of the crisis in the Canadian university and college system—was that there was no Minister in the federal Government charged with the prime responsibility—indeed,

there has never been a Minister in the federal Government charged with the prime responsibility—for seeing to the health of our post-secondary education system. The federal Government puts a lot of money into that system, yet it does not give a certain Minister the prime responsibility for seeing to the federal role in the health of that system.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Lalonde) is responsible for narrow financial matters, or seems to be. No matter what his feelings may be about the university and college system in Canada, on the importance of our having a first rate university and college system, his first duty is purely financial. His first duty is to argue with the provincial Ministers of Finance about the allocation of fiscal resources. His first duty is not, any more than it is the first duty of Ministers of Finance for the provinces, to think about the educational system at the college and university level. This leaves at the federal level, the Secretary of State and the Minister of Employment and Immigration as the next two Ministers who are, or should be, most concerned. The Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Roberts), who was the lucky recipient, as I noted a moment ago, of that \$100 million which should have gone to the post-secondary education system last year, is primarily concerned with technical training and retraining programs. And indeed, as important as they are—and I may say he has not done a very good job with them—they do not address the crises in our higher education system. They do not address what kind of high level skills this society needs today and will continue to need tomorrow.

The Department of Employment and Immigration is not concerned primarily with the fact that nine out of 10 of our Ph.D graduates cannot get jobs. That Department is not concerned with devising a scheme of research assistance for those young people who have completed Ph.Ds and are unable to get teaching or other jobs. Research assistance would enable these people to keep “tuned up”, so to speak, so that they could become research associates in the different universities of the country rather than being lost to the scholastic sector of our system.

The Minister of State for Economic and Regional Development and Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Johnston) should have some particular concern in this area. But this area is only a fraction of the total problem, a fraction of the total picture of this level of the educational system in our society. It was the Secretary of State who said a few years ago that the health of the post-secondary system was a priority for this Government. Perhaps the Secretary of State today feels the same way, although I had some doubts when I listened to an answer he gave to a question of mine two days ago, and I will mention that later.

● (1420)

We have the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, the Minister of State for Economic Development and for Science and Technology, the Secretary of State (Mr. Joyal), and to some extent the Minister of Labour (Mr. Ouellet), who have an interest in bits of this