

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, April 10, 1984

The House met at 11 a.m.

● (1105)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Pinard: Mr. Speaker, I indicated yesterday that tomorrow would be an allotted day. Although the fact remains that tomorrow will be an allotted day, I should also like to designate Friday of this week as another allotted day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS AND ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS FINANCING ACT, 1977

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Thursday, April 5, consideration of the motion of Mr. MacLaren (for Mr. Lalonde) that Bill C-12, an Act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act, 1977, be read the third time and do pass.

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, in speaking previously to this Bill, I was arguing that the Government should be expanding funding for post-secondary education rather than reducing the amount of funds that are available. I have also argued that these reductions in the amount of money that the federal Government is prepared to spend on post-secondary education will have a more serious effect, I believe, on both deaf and hard of hearing Canadians. At the present time access to higher education is limited for deaf and hard of hearing students. There is a lack of program services and facilities. Among other problems, there are insufficient notetakers, interpretative services, special preparatory programs, sound amplification systems and other facilities to give them equal access to post-secondary educational opportunities.

● (1110)

The need for greater access to advanced technical programs for the deaf and hard of hearing is critical. Modern technology and computer sciences will have an enormous impact on our society. Our hearing impaired population can stand to benefit greatly from extensive training. It is estimated that there are between 30 and 40 deaf students in Canadian universities.

Statistics are not available as to the enrolment of hard of hearing students in Canadian universities. The universities and colleges with hearing impaired students have attempted to provide some support services. Such services may take the form of notetakers or sign language interpreters but these services are not structured into an ongoing program.

In the past and until as recently as the fall of 1982, deaf students capable of progressing to a higher education had the limited options of attempting to compete with their hearing peers to gain access to a regular university or community college and then struggle through the program with or without support services, depending on the availability of such services.

Another option is to seek access to an existing institution which has initiated some form of support services or even the Gallaudet College entrance examination for acceptance into a program specifically designed to meet the needs of the hearing impaired. There are about 120 Canadian citizens currently attending Gallaudet College in the United States.

The third option is no longer available to deaf Canadians at the preparatory level because the rubella epidemic in the United States in 1963-64 created an unusually high number of college-age American deaf students seeking admission to Gallaudet College. It is worth while pointing out, as I did previously in this debate, Mr. Speaker, that there is absolutely no Canadian institution for deaf or hard of hearing students. If a deaf or hard of hearing Canadian wants to be educated or even gain access to post-secondary education, he or she has to go to the United States.

In addition to the problem of admittance, Canadian students are encountering other difficulties at Gallaudet College. Tuition fees have been increased and on-campus housing is limited. This has resulted in additional expenses for students as well as possibly increasing difficulties in finding suitable housing in the vicinity of the campus.

Given American statistics which show that 30 per cent of U.S. graduates of residential schools for the deaf will attend post-secondary institutions, it is expected that a similar percentage of Canadian deaf students would also want to pursue higher education. At this point it is crucial to indicate that even if the facilities of Gallaudet College are available to Canadian hearing impaired students, this College provides services only in English and is not accessible to deaf Francophones.

It is evident from the situation I have described that the time is long past when Canadians can safely rely on American institutions in order to educate their deaf youth at the university level. American Government-supported facilities must, by definition, give priority to their own citizens and should not be