

We cannot have it both ways. On one hand we are talking about the need to reform our educational system in order to improve our way of doing business in this country so we can move forward and on the other hand we are hitting those who are going to create the infrastructure necessary for that kind of move.

By the year 2000 we are going to see a vast majority of jobs that require at least a high school or post-secondary education. We are going to see a shrinking work force and an increase in the number of people who need assistance from the system. We are going to see the need for a dynamic work force.

One would think that any person with proper reasoning would put a lot more emphasis on helping those who are going to be helping the future generation. It is the student population that will be the main instrument for moving into the next century.

The government is burdening those students with an extra debt load. It is penalizing them. Many of those students are leaving school or finishing university and finding themselves in a situation in which there is no job available for them. The government cannot have it both ways. It cannot on one hand tell the public it is putting more emphasis on education while on the other penalize students who are going to school. It is trying to block students who are going to school. It is creating road blocks for them in terms of accessibility.

Just recently the NDP Government of Ontario eliminated student grants altogether. This is a government that had promised to increase assistance to educational institutions and to students. Now the federal government is doing the same thing. The student population is finding itself in a very awkward position.

We must ensure that we have an accessible national plan for post-secondary education. We must ensure that education becomes a right and not a privilege in the society we live in. It is quite sad, particularly when we look at the illiteracy rate in Canada. Forty per cent of the population group between the ages of 15 to 24 is considered to be functionally illiterate. That represents a loss of revenue to the economy of \$10 billion as a result of illiteracy. The government is doing nothing to deal

tangibly with accessibility to post-secondary education and education as a whole.

It is deplorable that on the one hand the government promised in 1992 that it would consult with the student population and on the other hand in 1993 it even denied students the right to appeal before a committee so they could argue their case and take the government to task about the 3 per cent tax on student loans. Enough is enough. We cannot continue to fool the public by saying that education is a priority when in fact what the government is doing, in conjunction with the provincial governments in some cases, is trying to create road-blocks, trying to avoid the reform of the educational system, trying to really deliver a blow to those who want to progress in life and move on to make a better life not only for themselves but for society as a whole. It is high time the government took this piece of legislation and put it aside until such time as the commitment of the Minister of Finance is fulfilled in trying to amend the act, trying to do the proper consultation and trying to see what really needs to be done.

I can see my time is coming to an end, but the student population—

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will be able to continue after Question Period when we resume debate on the bill.

As it is eleven o'clock, the House will now proceed to statements by members, pursuant to Standing Order 31.

STATEMENTS PURSUANT TO S. O. 31

[English]

COD FISHERY

Mr. Francis G. LeBlanc (Cape Breton Highlands—Canso): Madam Speaker, both fishermen and processors in the gulf and on the Scotia shelf are getting increasingly frustrated and angry with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans' confused policies on the harvesting plan for the cod fishery.

On December 18, as part of the 1993 groundfish management plan and a campaign to prevent the capture of juvenile fish, the minister ordered all gear sectors to develop fishing plans before they would be permitted to fish. These and other new restrictions have greatly