

Established Programs Financing

House to speak to a Bill entitled "An Act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act, 1977". While this Bill is titled that way, Mr. Speaker, I suspect a more appropriate name would be a Bill of short-sightedness. It ignores the long-term social and economic realities of this country.

• (1130)

If there was ever a time in our history to be focusing more attention than ever before on post-secondary education, that time has to be now. We are entering a period of rapid social, economic and technological change. We are seeing a society emerge where sophisticated education, training, research and development have become an absolute necessity. Even in the most simplistic workplaces we have people who, almost by definition, require extra special, ongoing training. In other words, we have entered a time in our history where all Canadians, regardless of whether they are cattlemen, farmers, office workers, loggers or fishermen, have to be up to date on new technology, techniques, methodologies and new approaches.

What I am attempting to say, Mr. Speaker, is that in an effort to prepare ourselves for the realities of the 21st century, what happens in our post-secondary institutions, our vocational schools, technical schools, colleges and universities has never been more important. At a time when we need to be investing more private and public money in training and education, what are we doing? Particularly, what are we doing in this country relative to our major competitors? Countries such as Sweden, Japan, West Germany, Switzerland and Austria are investing more and more of their private and public moneys in post-secondary education and training. But if you look around the world you will find one country which has become notable for, in a sense, cutting back on post-secondary education. That country is Canada. If that is not a step toward committing not only economic but social suicide, I do not know what is.

I want to put on record some very clear numbers which show what this Bill does to our post-secondary education funding in Canada. The Bill reduces what provinces would traditionally expect in the way of federal Government increases in post-secondary education funding to 6 per cent in the 1983-84 fiscal year, and 5 per cent in the 1984-85 fiscal year. The provinces will receive \$118 million less in 1983-84 and \$216 million less in 1984-85. In 1983-84 the total cash flow from the federal to the provincial governments is \$1.952 billion. After listening to Members opposite, one would expect those figures are going to increase for 1984-85. Well, for that period the cash flow from the federal to the provincial governments for post-secondary education will be \$1.917 billion, or \$35 million less next year in total dollars.

At a time when our country requires significant increases in education and training opportunities, Mr. Speaker, we are experiencing a reduction. We now see overall funding for post-secondary institutions, particularly in certain parts of the country, on the decline at a time when full-time university undergraduate enrolment is up 5 per cent over last year,

enrolment in colleges and technical schools is up 7 per cent over last year, and studies tell us that over the next four-year period we can expect university enrolments to increase an average of 6.6 per cent. What is going to happen to our first-class libraries? What will happen to our laboratories? What about the scientific equipment? What about research in the social sciences and humanities?

I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, but the bottom line is that the young people in our country are in double jeopardy. At a time when so many of our young people are unable to find jobs, they find it not only difficult but in many cases impossible to enter post-secondary institutions where the training they need is supposed to be available. In Toronto, for example, Ryerson turned away 7,000 young people last year. Algonquin College received 18,000 applications for only 4,700 spaces. Just the other day the University of British Columbia reduced its number of first-year students for next year by 500, at the same time increasing its tuition fees by 33 per cent. Simon Fraser University is increasing its tuition fees by 25 per cent. That means not only are we keeping more and more of our young people out of the training opportunities they should be receiving, but we are putting more pressure on the colleges and technical schools.

One would expect there to be more money flowing into the colleges and technical schools to ease this pressure cooker which is beginning to boil out there. But if we look at the Province of British Columbia the situation is virtually at a disaster point. Our colleges are bursting at the seams. While other provinces have passed along what little increase the federal Government has given them for post-secondary education, one province has not passed along a single penny, the Province of British Columbia. This year the Province is saying: "If you think it is bad this year, next year we are not going to pass along a single cent either; and we are going to ask for a 6 per cent cut in university and college funding". British Columbia has been cutting back on the funds which should rightfully go to post-secondary educational institutions.

I want to point out for the record that there is one province in this country which has not only passed along all the money but has increased it by 3.4 per cent, and that is the Province of Manitoba which happens to be governed by the New Democratic Party these days. They see the wisdom of investing in the future of their young people. I wish I could say the same about my own Province of British Columbia, Mr. Speaker. That Province, based on the economic theory of restraint, has now reduced opportunities not only for the young people of British Columbia, but opportunities for the Province itself.

As we vote on this Bill, Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important for us to remember that how we provide for our young people today will decide how Canada is going to perform in the 21st century. If this Bill is any indication of how this Government plans to provide for our young people, it is short-changing them. It is virtually guaranteeing that the young people in Canada do not have the same opportunities as young people in many other countries of the world, particularly those who compete with us in international markets.