

Government Orders

I am very, very adamant about reducing cutbacks generally and about more specific types of control as to where our moneys go. I would like to believe that Bill C-60 is not an outright cutback in program funding, but my experience with this government has taught me that everything is painted up. One of my colleagues once said "tarted up", made to look very glossy and great, but as soon as you look underneath, there is something hidden. There is something that we, as unsuspecting Canadians, do not know and there is some hidden motive and that is a motive of cutback, a motive of letting go of the responsibility for health care. One of the biggest mistakes we could make is to let go of that responsibility in health care.

Established Programs Financing also relates to education and we have heard the Prime Minister and everyone go on about competition, saying we can compete. We can only compete if we have the best educated people around. We have seen some dramatic cutbacks in the education system. How can we say we can compete when at the same time we have cut back and cut back on transfer payments to education? We have literally forced our deficit on to the provinces and said to the provinces they have a choice: they can either increase their taxes or cut back on their services. What we have seen in many instances is a mix of the two.

As a result, our post-secondary students are paying more in tuition fees. They are having a harder and harder time to get this first class education. Again, the idea behind being a Canadian is making sure that all of us have equal opportunities. It is making sure that those of us who come from poorer backgrounds and those of us who come from more affluent families have this same opportunity to access that education and to access those jobs.

The other day I had a call from a constituent of mine who was extremely disturbed because of the end of the family allowance that was announced in the budget. She was extremely disturbed because this was the amount of money she set aside every month and matched for her children's education. She was upset because this was going to be cut back, but she was also upset because she could see the increase in the cost of education. She could see that when her children, who are 7 and 9, got to be of

an age to go to university, it would cost far more perhaps than she would have been able to put aside.

She was upset with the fact that the family allowance would no longer be there for her to put aside for her children. She was also upset with this fear that it is not going to be an education that is open to everyone.

As best I could, I tried to allay her fears, but I feel that there are times when it is justifiable to feel this need to be reassured that our children, the next generation, will be given the tools with which they can compete in a way that will make sure they can guarantee themselves and their future children a very comfortable life. Do not forget that a lot of the moneys that would go to fight the deficit come from tax revenues which are only generated when people have good, high-paying jobs; when their income is there to pay the taxes. Everything is connected.

What we have seen lately is more of this letting go. We find ourselves in a constitutional crisis in which we look at this debate with Quebec and with the provinces and we feel this fear that there is no strong central force. There is no one willing to stand up and say: "Yes, I will guarantee that there will be a Canadian medical system beyond all of them. Not a Quebec medical system or a Manitoba medical system, or an Ontario medical system, but a system that is truly Canadian for all of us in which all of us have equal access". The same thing applies to education. We need a Canadian system which guarantees that all education will be open to all. Every one of us who is able to go to school should have the right to do so in a way that does not break us.

In this last budget, on the one hand the government took away that 3 per cent surtax on loans that it had instituted, but on the other hand it has now said that it would start charging interest from the day that a person graduates. If you go to school for any number of years and you borrow, you could find yourself on the day of graduation owing \$25,000 to \$30,000. What a horrendous debt to have to start off with, especially in these days when the job market expectations are not particularly good even if you are a graduate from a university or from post-secondary education. The wages are not that high. To start off your adult life with a debt of that magnitude is extremely serious.