

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

had anticipated for health and post-secondary education. The mistake allows me to underline what is not only an inequity, but I think more likely a tragedy.

• (1120)

What we are talking about is, first, a primary resource, and that is young people. We are talking about that resource in a province which is struggling economically to find itself. The great hope that we had was Hibernia. With the plummeting price of oil that project is certainly in jeopardy at the moment, unless the Government of Canada is going to announce a regime which will see some sort of financial support, either through tax measures or otherwise, for that particular project.

If I may just stray a moment, two press conferences in Newfoundland last week highlighted that. The oil companies jointly said that they would lose 4,800 jobs in that province unless some action was taken to shore up the weakened state of the oil industry. Mr. Bill Hopper of Petro-Canada in St. John's on Friday said that the ball was now in the court of the Government of Canada. Petro-Canada would do no more drilling in Newfoundland, and unless some sort of regime was put in place the Hibernia project will not be able to go ahead. I make that point because I think it is relevant here.

There is another point. Even if the Government of Canada comes through with a policy now and Hibernia does go ahead, which I hope is the case, the real pay-off to Newfoundland is going to be in jobs for Newfoundlanders. There is no way that our people are going to get those jobs unless they have the training. I make the point because it is relevant here on this particular issue. The key thing that we need in Newfoundland is training for our young people, where there is a 50 per cent unemployment rate at the present time. The Senate committee talked about a national tragedy in this country for young people. In my province now we have a 50 per cent unemployment rate among eligible young people. What they need is some sort of training and education that will enable them to take the jobs we hope are going to be available. How is that going to happen when we see that over a five-year period there will be \$132 million less in the field of post-secondary education in my province alone, not counting the other provinces across this country?

What does that mean? It means if we are going to take up the slack and forge ahead somebody has to step into the breach. Who is it going to be? Is it going to be the Province of Newfoundland? We know how financially strapped they are. We have been depending over the years since we joined Confederation on the Government of Canada making up the inequalities that we find. What we are finding here is that there is now a cut-back, an abrogation of that treaty we signed in 1949 when we became Canadians. We had expected that Confederation would bring this kind of benefit and, indeed, it did. What we are seeing now is a slip back into the past whereby we are going to have to depend more and more on our own meagre and inadequate resources. I think that is the real tragedy of the Bill we are discussing here today.

We are discussing a Bill which says to young people, "You are going to get less than you had expected. You have to wait". There is a 50 per cent unemployment rate. There are opportunities ahead, but education is the key issue if we are going to make progress in my province, and this Bill puts that in jeopardy. I think this is one of the most serious actions that has taken place in a long time. I do not know where the money went. I know we can find money to bail out banks in western Canada, so how is it that we cannot find money to help young people get an adequate education? How is it that we can agree to cut back from an 8 per cent increase to a 6 per cent increase in the funding of post-secondary education and health? How can you justify that as the Government? That is the real tragedy of what is going on here today.

What we should be doing, as I tried to point out on Friday, instead of making education second, third and fourth place we should be making it the number one priority. That is what other federal states are doing. We can talk about free trade, industrial strategy and new tax regimes, but unless we give some priority to education we are not going to be able to compete as a country in a smaller and far more integrated and interdependent world.

Every other country that I know of is giving the kind of prominence that we should be giving to education. In Germany and Switzerland, for example, which are both federal states, the federal Government and the provincial Governments work together. In Germany, for example, the two key planning and advisory bodies, the Bund Landers commission for education, planning and research promotion, and the science council both have equal voting representation from the Bund and from the Landers. We have to start doing that too.

There must be a greater co-ordination of education in this country. There must be a greater emphasis on it. We cannot simply say that education is a provincial responsibility and leave it at that. There must be a national will and determination to do something to improve the state of education in this country. There must be that national will, and behind that national will there must be the dollars. There is no point in talking about that if we are not prepared to put the necessary dollars into it. That is the main point that I want to make.

As a matter of fact, the Canadian Teachers' Federation has said the same sort of thing about a national strategy for education. The Canadian Teachers' Federation advocated in a submission to the Macdonald Royal Commission the following:

The establishment of a Canadian Office of education jointly supported by the Government of Canada and the Governments of the provinces and territories. It would disseminate information nation-wide as well as promote research in education. It would study fiscal problems and recommend how they can be solved. It would co-ordinate federal education activities and promote common policies on education across Canada. The above Office would be supported by a Canadian Council of Education which would draw upon the advisory resources of a broad range of interests in Canadian society.

In other words, they are saying not only must the Governments work together, but we should be drawing on expert people who can make a contribution in the field of education. We should be drawing on those people in devising a national