

*Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act*

that "We are committed to sustaining the current federal financial commitment according to the formula set out in the 1977 agreement. We believe that financing of post-secondary education is an important priority for both levels of Government".

Indeed, it is a priority for both levels of government. That brings attention to one of the significant tragedies of the enactment of this legislation at this time. We are going to cut, over the next five years, EPF transfer payments by about \$7 billion. This we are going to do in the face of protestations from the provinces. It has to be a step that everyone must regard as inconsistent with promises of consultation. It must be regarded as the height of stupidity at a time when most would argue that the federal Government and the provincial Governments ought to be coming to some sort of an agreement with respect to defined levels of support for post-secondary education and health.

How can you expect to enter into productive negotiations for assured levels of post-secondary funding at the provincial and federal level, particularly when one seeks to find a commitment on the part of the provinces to initiate the process, by cutting funding of EPF.

Let me just say parenthetically that I am perfectly conscious and very much concerned about the implications to the health system of these cuts. Others within my party will address that specifically. I want to address this issue particularly from the perspective of two areas; youth policy and the development of a national science and technology policy.

The motivation of this legislation is to cut the deficit. Indeed, I heard someone from among Members opposite say in committee that if we can just get this deficit under control we will then be able to do something for post-secondary education and health.

If one looks at the deficit, and looks at it seriously, one inevitably is going to be concerned about it. Rational people are always concerned about a situation in which one spends more than one takes in. If one looks at the reasons for the federal deficit, surely among all the factors to which it can be attributed the most important is that there are serious deficiencies in the economy of this country. In its brightest moments this Government has identified the reasons for our economic deficiencies. Yet it has not managed to target in on the need for a more highly developed industrial base and greater commitment to research and technological development. In that way what is recognized in an analytical sense is often what must be done. The message from this surely is that small increases in expenditures, or a reallocation of funds, or rearrangement of priorities should be sought to ensure that our industrial base, our secondary manufacturing and, most specifically, our science and technology will be enhanced.

● (1200)

Last week I had the pleasure of participating in a national forum on science policy which was convened by the Minister of

State for Science and Technology (Mr. Oberle), a step for which he certainly should be congratulated. Representatives from all those sectors concerned about the development of research, science and technology in this country were in attendance at that meeting.

There was some difference of opinion on a number of areas concerning the enhancement of science and technology in this country. However, there was absolute unanimity with respect to the need to do something about basic research and the quality of and accessibility to our post-secondary institutions. There was unanimity that the cuts in the rate of increase in Established Programs Financing was detrimental to the development of a future for this country that would be adaptable to the world-wide economic circumstances which we must challenge. No one dissented from that point of view.

It must have been extremely embarrassing to the Minister, who I am sure was sincere in attempting to begin the development of science and technology policy, to be exposed as being part of a Government that would deprive the post-secondary system of the much needed opportunity to improve and enable us to better compete.

One might ask whether there has been any serious effort by the Government to elaborate a strategy for the future or whether it is interested in only one thing, the bilateral free trade negotiations. At times it seems that the bilateral free trade negotiations are a substitute for policy development. The Government seems unwilling to develop such a policy in all the areas where serious investment must be made.

I have already indicated that post-secondary education does not only involve research and development, but the education of a skilled workforce. I must confess that in the course of the discussions at the forum last week, I objected to some degree to hearing young people referred to as our most valuable human resource. I think that is probably a reflection of the same kind of attitudinal problem we have toward research, science and technology and the development of a solid, modern industrial base. We are so preoccupied with our resource base—our fish, trees and so on—that we cannot recognize the need to be concerned about young people unless we identify them as a resource, like fish, trees and forests. This fact is another reason for my concern about this issue. Our young people are being ignored as a result of depriving the post-secondary system of necessary funding, failing to enter into appropriate negotiations with the provinces, and taking action which would forestall appropriate negotiations.

The Government purports to be in the process of developing a policy for youth. Whenever the issue of a youth policy arises, the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald), or her shadow, seem to convey the notion that the only issue with respect to a youth policy is whether Challenge '86 or the Canadian Jobs Strategy is functioning. We know that both those programs have been called into question. I simply want to draw to the attention of the House that youth policy concerns a number of issues besides training programs. Such a policy involves doing something besides enhancing a