

Established Programs Financing

In Vancouver public schools, 52,000 students have English as a second language. Federal and provincial cuts to ESL programs mean many of these students will be handicapped in their future education. The federal Government has neglected its responsibility to immigrant families. I want to mention in particular its responsibility to mothers who often remain in the home and are handicapped because of the language barrier.

There is a massive outcry against the provincial cuts as well as federal cuts to universities and colleges in British Columbia. George Petersen, President of the University of British Columbia, says: "If you are poor you may have a hard time getting a university education from now on". The university is raising tuition fees by 33 per cent. Only the brightest students will be accepted for enrolment, and student aid is restricted. Other universities and colleges are forced to follow this trend because the Social Credit Government has refused to distribute federal funds fairly or to share costs. Funding will be curtailed even further by Bill C-12.

I wish to quote Christina Taulu, a parent advisory representative in Vancouver East. She has called university restraints racist and discriminatory. English programs for new Canadians, higher university fees and stricter university requirements are making it very difficult for children from the east end of Vancouver to have access to an education. She said: "Unless you're rich, you're not going to get very much education". She further stated:

You're going to have a greater disparity between the east and west side of Vancouver . . . the rich can get into universities. But the poor? Forget it . . . I call it discrimination. It's a form of racism . . . children from Vancouver's east side often start out at a disadvantage . . . Many children have parents for whom English is a second language.

Another parent said:

"Higher fees are making it more difficult for children from low and middle-class families . . . rumours are that the provincial government will drop the grant portion of its student aid program. Meanwhile, the minimum grades required to enter universities are expected to rise."

Higher education will be harder to get for children of non-English speaking families. This year, the Vancouver School Board plans to cut \$800,000 out of its ESL programs as a direct result of provincial government cutbacks. Another parent said:

I feel that a lot of very qualified young people are going to be lost. They won't be able to afford the university fees . . . It's the long range forecast that worries me . . . No jobs. No schools. No hope.

A grade 12 student at Britannia High School also spoke of the unfairness of imposed exams that do not take into account cultural and geographic differences. She said:

I don't know, but it seems to me that over on the west side of town, kids there get in a lot easier to university. When you go to the west side, it is mostly caucasian. There's more money. Whereas here, a lot of the kids have English as a second language . . . Our chances of getting into university aren't as good . . . Life is unfair.

Finally, I want to point out the difficulties for women students. Enrolment of women in universities and colleges in the seventies increased by 95 per cent. In the eighties, many women are being excluded from universities by high fees. Also, vocational training options are limited. The National Training

Act is designed for men, without adequate support services such as day care. How can a woman with a child survive on a weekly training allowance of \$150? How can a secretary compete with automation if retraining is not available to her?

This country must not allow our educational system to be eroded. Our citizens, regardless of income or ethnic origin, have equal rights to education, training and retraining. To survive as a nation, we must have a highly skilled work force. Federal and provincial governments must invest in education now to achieve future goals of increased human and economic productivity.

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina West): Mr. Speaker, any government that puts a higher priority on corporate giveaways, corporate income tax deferrals, tax loopholes for the wealthy, fighter planes that we neither need nor can use, while cutting back funding for post-secondary education, hospitalization and medicare surely has its priorities backwards. Expenditures of the nature of those in this legislation are always looked upon as some kind of expense. It is not an expense. Funds for post-secondary education, hospitalization and medicare are an investment in the nation. As a result, governments get a return on that investment far in excess of what it pays out.

Better and higher education means a better and higher income, which means higher taxes being paid. During the earning years of a person with a post-secondary education, taxes paid of all kinds are many times more than what it costs governments or the parents. Similarly, curing illnesses and keeping people healthy keeps them earning an income and paying taxes. This kind of investment should receive first priority in the budgets and legislation of any government. About the only good thing with this Bill is that we will be able to find out specifically how much goes to post-secondary education, hospitalization and to medicare. Beyond that, it is more publicity than accountability. No doubt the federal Government will put up billboards outside hospitals and universities indicating how much money it gave. It will be careful not to say how much it cut funding back. It will copy the Bill Davis tactic and put a sign in every bus and street car and on every park bench saying how much it gave.

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The parliamentary task force on fiscal arrangements rejected federal cutbacks in the order of \$500 million for 1982-83 and \$1 billion annually thereafter. The cutbacks proposed now are far more severe than those already rejected by that task force. They amount to \$1.6 billion in 1982-83 compared to the \$500 million rejected by the task force. They will amount to \$11.1 billion over the five year period of the new arrangements compared to the \$4.5 billion rejected by the task force.

The impact of the cutbacks on the provinces is uneven and affects the so-called "have-not" provinces disproportionately to the "have" provinces. The "have-not" provinces bear 71.6 per cent of the cutbacks, have 43.5 per cent of the population and nearly 37 per cent of national output. In contrast, the "have" provinces, British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario, bear 28.4 per cent of the cutbacks with 56 per cent of the population and