

Established Programs Financing

One of the problems in this country is that for a long period of time we have thought about the physical frontier. There is a lot of land in this country that is summer fallow and is left idle. We have always been of the opinion that if we want to produce more, we simply have to clear more bush, put on more fertilizer and we can produce more. That is no longer the case. We need a lot of effort and energy directed toward the area of how we fertilize. There is a whole area of micro-nutrients that we know virtually nothing about. We talk about the main plant nutrients. They are nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium and sulphur. There are eight or ten micro-nutrients that are very important in getting a maximum yield.

Some very exciting work is being done in the Hon. Member's province at Lethbridge dealing with nitrogen fixation as far as cereals are concerned. It may mean that in the future we can produce cereals such as corn and small grains without the necessity of such large expenditures on nitrogen fertilizers. We are now capable of this in the area of biotechnology, I am told. Some of these matters are so involved and complicated that I am sure many of us cannot grasp them without a considerable amount of prior knowledge.

There are plants in the far north, for example, that are capable of carrying on photosynthesis at very, very low temperatures, well below the freezing mark. Through biotechnology and genetic engineering, we are capable of being able to pull out some of those chromosomes and put them in plants that are grown on the Prairies. We genuinely could, for instance, have a winter wheat that would be able to produce energy and photosynthesize at temperatures below zero. These are the kinds of exciting things going on in agriculture today. To my mind, that is where the frontier is. That is where the Government should be putting its emphasis.

• (1115)

The Bill before us today is Bill C-12. I attempted to point out last night that Bill C-12 of the previous session was referred to as the bankruptcy Bill. In many ways Bill C-12 in this session is also a bankruptcy Bill because it points out how bankrupt the Government is in terms of ideas and faith in the future. Instead of encouraging research that will lead us to be more productive and competitive in feeding people around the world, the Government is discouraging that by reducing the funding that will go toward developing some of the exciting prospects that the Hon. Member for Bow River referred to.

In many ways this Bill concerns the future of our country and it points out how bankrupt this Government is in terms of its vision for our country.

Mr. Fisher: Mr. Speaker, we have heard about the Hon. Member's great dedication to research and education. We heard the same comment from the Member for Brandon-Souris (Mr. Clark) who gave a very good speech along those lines. It is good to see a Manitoba Tory who has this dedication to higher education. Could he explain to us why his provincial colleagues, when Sterling Lyon was Premier, reduced their annual commitment to university education during the term of their government and just let us carry the ball instead?

Mr. Mayer: Mr. Speaker, I am not so sure that I would totally agree with what the Member said. I believe he may have seen a reduction in real terms but it was different in terms of actual dollars. I would not agree with it regardless of which government does it.

I am glad to see the Minister of Agriculture here because the biggest tragedy of all is that the Minister sat on \$9.2 million of producer money for over ten years and did absolutely nothing with it. If the Member wants to talk about a disgrace and about what could have been done with producer money, that \$9.2 million never earned one penny of interest during the whole time the Minister of Agriculture sat on it. If he had invested that money he could have more than doubled it so that when it was turned over to people who were going to do research last year, they would have had \$18 million or \$20 million to work with instead of \$9.2 million.

That is what the Member for Mississauga North (Mr. Fisher) should be talking about to his own Minister, because he is a Parliamentary Secretary and could do something about it. I will do what I can with my provincial colleagues in Manitoba but the biggest tragedy is with the present Minister.

Mr. Whelan: They have not done anything with that money since I gave it to them over a year ago.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Herbert): Order. Just so there is no misunderstanding, the eight-hour period has expired and speeches from now on will be of ten minutes duration.

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, the first point that I would like to make with respect to Bill C-12 concerns something I can agree on with the Government. That is the proposed name change. It is proposed to change the name of the existing Act from the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act, 1977 to the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Federal Post-Secondary Education and Health Contributions Act, 1977. That is precisely what it should have been called ever since 1977. I am sure that the previous title was used solely for the purpose of obfuscation.

I remember back in 1977, before I was a Member of the House, when I got wind of financial legislation that was being proposed to change the health financing system. I phoned my MP at that time who was not one of the brightest gentlemen in the world—in fact he was a member of the NDP at that time—and asked him if he could get me a copy of the Bill. He obviously flipped through the Order Paper and then told me that there was no such Bill before Parliament. He said that there was nothing there on health financing. It was pretty obvious that all that we had at that time was an attempt at obfuscation. Now that everyone knows what took place, it is only right that we should support the change to the proper name.

• (1120)

The real principle of the Bill cannot be hidden despite all the wording and terminology recited by the Hon. Member who