

The Quebec Minister insisted that he had exerted pressures on the Government in Ottawa so it would understand conditions in Quebec. Not only I did that, answered the Minister of Finance, but I added other considerations—

[English]

What is particularly sad in this situation is that we have a Government attempting to deal with the deficit, and that must be dealt with, with two very critical programs for Canadian people, namely, education and health care.

While the Government is cutting back in that area what is it doing at the same time? As it did in the last Budget it is giving a \$500,000 tax exemption for people with capital gains, who are the wealthier people in our population. The Government has spent approximately \$1 billion bailing out the two banks that failed recently and the creditors in those banks, even though the creditors were beyond the \$60,000 limit for insurance purposes. The Government provided tax benefits to the large oil companies. These are very, very expensive programs. The Government is doing that at the same time as it is attempting to cut back on education and health care.

Let me point out for symbolic purposes, and I know it got some of my colleagues upset the other day, that when this Government came to office one of the first things it did was to increase the size of the Minister's offices. The Government raised the salaries of what used to be called executive assistants, made them chiefs of staff and gave them much higher salaries than are given to Members of Parliament. The Government established offices for Ministers recently in different parts of the country, and has announced one in Vancouver. I mentioned the establishment of an office for Mila Mulrone, the wife of the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulrone), which is completely unacceptable and had never been done in this country before. Here we have the wife of the Prime Minister proclaiming herself a real political animal. In other words, she admits that her work is principally political on behalf of the Conservative Party, and she is being paid through public funds for an office on Parliament Hill. That is a symbolic issue.

[Translation]

Mr. Lanthier: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Parliamentary Secretary on a point of order.

Mr. Lanthier: Mr. Speaker, I wonder what the outstanding conduct of the wife of the Prime Minister of Canada, the greatest among Canadian women, has to do with Bill C-96.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I do not think that is a point of order. The Hon. Member has exactly 30 seconds.

Mr. Allmand: I know it is not a point of order, but I am glad the Member raised it. It has a lot to do with this Bill because Bill C-96 cuts important funding to the provinces for education and health care, when at the same time the Government is spending money on such frills as offices for the wife of the

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Prime Minister, and that is unacceptable in this country. It is only an example of the profligacy of this Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret but the Hon. Member's time is expired.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Prud'homme (Saint-Denis): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty obvious that we have almost finished consideration of Bill C-96, an Act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Federal Post-Secondary Education and Health Contributions Act, 1977. We, that is, our small team of Opposition Members, since there are only 39 of us in this party and 30 in the other Opposition party. But nevertheless, the Government, with the biggest majority ever, 211, since Confederation, has decided to crush that Opposition by gagging it, by putting the previous question. This means that the Government will probably make it this afternoon, unless we get reinforcements. However, I think we are running out, because there are hardly any Opposition Members left who have not spoken to the Bill. But nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, this Government has resorted to a procedure that is certainly not acceptable in a true democracy, and 211 Members could at least have the patience to listen to what the Official Opposition—

Mr. Gauthier: And to learn!

Mr. Prud'homme: Not only to listen, but to learn, as my hon. friend from Ottawa—Vanier (Mr. Gauthier) pointed out.

Mr. Speaker, it is a pity, because I wish my colleagues and especially those from Quebec, would realize the kind of impact this Bill will have on my own province, the Province of Quebec.

I am told that at a reception someone heard a rather interesting comment by our Quebec Premier, Mr. Bourassa, who said not long ago, and I will allow myself the indiscretion of quoting him: "the 66 million I am about to lose are probably the DRIE Minister's \$64 million that are going to another province... ", the reference being to the contracts the controversy is all about today.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry they don't realize how important this Bill is. They are undermining the very sectors on which Canada has built its reputation: health care and education, areas in which I think we can say our country has made enormous progress in the years since the War.

We are envied by the world. We are envied by our much richer neighbours to the South, the United States, and that is saying a lot. We are envied not only by the rest of the world but by our most precious neighbours the United States. How many Americans who know about our system envy us? How many Americans who do not know about it would, if they did, urge their Government to have two of the best programs in the world. But if we cut back those expenditures without consultations, without consulting the provinces—because after all they are directly involved—how can we believe in good harmony between the Federal Government and the provinces?