

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to quote the comments of Mr. Roch La Salle, the present Minister of Public Works, at the third reading stage of Bill C-77, on April 5, 1982. According to him, one thing was clear, and that was that, a new formula, the federal Government would have been better off than before since it would pay \$5 billion less in the following five years than under the old formula. Those facts are inescapable, Mr. Speaker. And we know indeed that the cost of those services that are so vital to all Canadians is increasing and will keep increasing, in tune with the current economic conditions.

Mr. Speaker, the present Minister of Public Works (Mr. La Salle) said the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) has crammed the provinces into a financial strait-jacket because the Federal Government is reducing the deficit by slashing transfer payments to the provinces. He goes on to say that this Bill involves billions of dollars and has very important ramifications for the service areas concerned.

I cannot understand, said the Minister when he was speaking for the Opposition, why the Government did not succeed in reaching a consensus and an acceptable compromise. He concluded by saying: Because of its actions, attitude and arrogance, the Government has succeeded in creating a climate of suspicion.

Mr. Speaker, I could not myself do a better job of saying that than the present Minister of Public Works when he was the Opposition critic. It is because of its actions, its attitude, its arrogance that the Tory Government is now creating all those problems with the provinces, including Quebec. The Conservatives are the ones who made those big promises, those generous promises: They would maintain the 1977 formula. No cuts! They would restore the situation to what it was before cuts were introduced by the Liberals. Mr. Speaker, what we now find is that the Conservatives have turned out to be the new Liberals. They are just so bad as the Liberals who were in Government before September, 1984.

I put the question to you, Mr. Speaker, you are a politician of great ability. You know the situation in Quebec because you are yourself a Quebecer. Could you yourself see any difference between the Liberals under Pierre Trudeau and the Conservatives under Mr. Mulroney? Were Mr. MacEachen's policies when he was Minister of Finance any different from the policies of Mr. Wilson (Etobicoke Centre) as regards those cuts and the funding formula for health and post-secondary education, where Quebec is concerned? Mr. Speaker, if you are really sincere and honest, you will resume your place and respond by suggesting that no, you can see no difference at all, other than you are Tories and the others are Grits. Mr. Speaker, we in our Party can see no difference.

I remember my Leader asking this question during the elections: What is actually the difference between Visa and Mastercard? It was tweedledum and tweedledee, as we say in English. They are the same. It might even be said, Mr. Speaker,

that there could be a slight difference in that the Conservatives are worse, because they added other cuts on top of those that were imposed by the Liberals.

Let us now look at the impact of those cuts, Mr. Speaker. In Quebec, for instance, the estimated loss for 1986-87, besides the \$66 million already lost by Quebec, will be \$81.9 million; in 1987-88, the loss will be \$174.9 million; in 1988-89, \$276 million; in 1989-90, \$388.8 million; in 1990-91, Quebec will lose more than \$500 million that are essential to pay for post-secondary education and to keep our hospitals open, to ensure a good level of health services to Quebecers. When the people of Quebec elected 57 Conservative Members during the last elections, it was like chicken voting for Colonel Sanders. Now they will be losing \$500 million a few years ahead, in terms of health services and post-secondary education. The total over those five years, Mr. Speaker, will be \$2,435.4 million. Now, what does that mean?

I therefore appeal to Hon. Members here, because Conservative Members from Quebec apparently do not wish to get involved in the debate. The guarantees which were given by the Minister of Finance and other Conservative Members to the Opposition, to the effect that such cuts would have just one result. They will decrease Quebec's ability to really enter the post-industrial age, to maintain a capacity to lead with state-of-the-art technology, to maintain its ability to compete in a very difficult world. All this because of the cuts that will be hitting Quebec's post-secondary education and community colleges.

Such cuts, Mr. Speaker, amounting to \$2,435.4 million over five years, cannot but affect the province's health services.

Now Montrealers will perhaps continue to enjoy satisfactory health care. However, will the Quebec Government be in position to maintain those same standards in Rimouski, on the North Shore, in the Abitibi and in all other Quebec areas? I would say that the answer is probably no. People will have to travel to Montreal to obtain the services that are unavailable in their own area.

The entire province will suffer from a reduction which will increase as far as hospital beds are concerned.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all the Quebec Members who are here this question: Are you proud of your performance as elected representatives now forming a new Government? You had promised so many things to Quebecers, but they will now suffer still more as a result of additional cuts to those already made by the previous Liberal Government.

Mr. Speaker, I ask those Members to give their views on that prejudicial Bill and tell us what should be done in Quebec.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, the subject matter of the Bill is that payments for the financing of established programs will be cut by 2 per cent per year.