

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

in the early days of its mandate, one would think that it would call a meeting of first Ministers or Finance Ministers to tell them what it intended to do and to ask their opinions. The Government did not do that. It broke a contract with the provinces and all Premiers have condemned the Government. They have brought into question the credibility and integrity of the Government.

Canadians are saying that the Conservative Government has frittered away the trust and mandate it was given by the people of Canada in September, 1984. In a very dramatic fashion the people of Canada gave the Prime Minister and the Conservative Party a tremendous mandate for change. That is now gone. All that is left of the mandate is Conservative bodies in the House of Commons. According to any public opinion poll to which you wish to refer, the Conservative Party has lost that support and mandate. In fact, I suggest that the Conservative Party is very quickly losing its right to govern in Canada. The people of Canada will not forget. One of the central issues of Bill C-96 is credibility, honesty and integrity.

On March 23, 1982, a very prominent member of the Conservative Cabinet said:

The only sign (the federal Government) shows of cutting spending is by shifting the burden of the established programs funding on to the provincial governments. The provinces are now moving into a deficit position, a position which will make it more difficult for them to finance this shift in spending That is not co-operative federalism. That is predatory federalism and it will not and cannot work in this country.

The famous Canadian who made that statement in the House of Commons on March 23, 1982, was none other than the Minister of Finance, the same Minister who introduced Bill C-96. Was he being sincere then or is he being sincere today? These are the words forever entrenched in *Hansard* for every Canadian to read. He went on to say:

Taking the action of unilaterally cutting the financing, which the Government is now proposing, and then having some discussions with the provinces, surely puts the cart before the horse. We should be reversing this procedure.

● (1140)

That was on March 24, 1982, page 15774-5 of *Hansard*, the now Minister of Finance speaking. Is it any wonder Canadians question the credibility of this Government?

The Liberal Party will not sit idly by and watch that Conservative Government attack some very basic institutions. The Liberal Party will not sit idly by and watch that Government attack post-secondary education or health care funding. We will stand up for the youth of Canada who are losing hope because of that Government. The Government is sending a message to the young people of Canada in the different measures it has taken, such as cutting Katimavik. The message our young people are getting is that Government does not care. It is more concerned about its wealthy friends on Bay Street and more paranoid about the deficit than the well-being of the young. The Liberal Party believes very strongly that our youth are our future. Once you take away their hope, there is nothing left. Our young people deserve that hope.

I note you have indicated my time is up. I would ask for unanimous consent of the House to continue—

Some Hon. Members: Oh, no!

Mr. Nunziata:—with my submissions. I note Conservative Members are all saying no because they do not want to hear about this legislation. I will therefore anxiously await their questions or their speeches to learn how they might justify this cruel and insensitive legislation which we will fight tooth and nail all along the line.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr. Gagliano: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague about the effect of this Bill on education in his own province. The Government is talking about free trade. How can we go into free trade negotiations if we reduce the opportunities for higher education for our youth? Can he describe to us what the situation would be in his own Province of Ontario if this legislation is implemented?

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for asking that very important question. I would also note that not one Conservative Member of Parliament stood up to ask a question. Not one single solitary Conservative Member of Parliament had the courage to stand up and try to defend this Bill or criticize my submissions. That means they are either sleeping, and I do not believe they are unless they have mastered the art of sleeping with their eyes open, or that this legislation is indefensible and they agree whole-heartedly with each and every word I spoke.

In response to my colleague, I would point out that the Province of Ontario is extremely worried about this legislation. I pointed out earlier that Ontario will receive \$3 billion less over the next five years in federal transfer payments. This very directly affects the universities that are already under-funded because of the previous provincial Conservative Government. The new Liberal Government of Ontario has already introduced measures to increase the financing and therefore the quality of post-secondary education which was tragically neglected by the previous Government.

Chief Justice Dickson of the Supreme Court of Canada recently spoke out on this issue. One cannot help but agree whole-heartedly with what he said in pointing out that universities are desperately short of money. He said:

It has been said by many people that education is too important to be left to educators. That may be true. But it is also true that education is too important to be left to ministers of finance.

This Bill is from the Minister of Finance and what the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada is saying is that he does not trust Ministers of Finance to deal with education because invariably the educational system is threatened. He goes on to say:

Second-class funding of universities will inevitably lead to second-class teachers, second-class students and—ultimately—a second-class nation.