

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 2, 1984

The House met at 11 a.m.

● (1105)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS AND ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS FINANCING ACT, 1977

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed from Wednesday, February 1, consideration of the motion of Mr. Lalonde that Bill C-12, an Act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act, 1977, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

Mr. Speaker: When the House adjourned, there was still some time remaining to the Hon. Member for Portage-Marquette (Mr. Mayer). Are there any questions or comments?

Mr. Blenkarn: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) was saying something about a \$5 billion transfer. I asked him about the fact that the Government was transferring in cash \$1.952 billion for post-secondary education and that was all. In addition, of course, there is the tax transfer.

Even if we consider the tax transfer, the effect of the Government's transfer is that the total entitlement is only \$3.973 billion. The Minister of Agriculture, in his usual incompetent fashion, was out of order by well over \$1,100 million, even excluding the fact that the Government of Canada never pays the cash.

The Hon. Member for Portage-Marquette (Mr. Mayer) knows something about agriculture and the training which is necessary for those involved in agriculture and the research and development that must certainly be necessary, although we are told by the Minister of Agriculture that it is unnecessary. Could he advise the House as to what he feels with respect to these transfers; for example, whether the transfer was really a transfer, whether he felt any further money should be spent on education, or whether he felt that the Minister in his representations to the House was correct?

Mr. Mayer: Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether anyone could say how much money is enough or how much is too much. What bothers me about the comments of the Minister

of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) was when he said that we, in the sense of the Government, were paying out its money. That to me is a mind-set which is unfortunate. If the Government wants to be honest about it, it does not have any money. It is the money of taxpayers which is held in trust. No matter how much they give, it is not the Government's money; it is the taxpayers' money. That is something we should bear in mind.

● (1110)

As I pointed out yesterday, we had better be sure that our priorities are right. When we are spending large amounts of taxpayers' money, we better make sure that it is used as wisely as possible. To my mind, one of the best ways to use it is in the form of an investment. When you spend money on research and development, by anyone's standard, that is an investment in the future of this country. It shows faith in the country's future. When the Government cuts back, reducing the amount it is prepared to spend on post-secondary education and the development of research, it shows a lack of faith in the future. That is something that this Party does not share. We are concerned about the future. We have faith in the future of this country. When those opposite vote for this Bill, they should realize that they will be voting against the future of this country rather than for it.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, I commend the Hon. Member on the excellent address that he gave yesterday. I was particularly interested in the points which the Hon. Member for Portage-Marquette (Mr. Mayer) raised with regard to research in agriculture.

The Hon. Member referred to genetic increases in crops. There is a false rumour, particularly among city people, that no research is necessary with regard to agricultural matters, that you simply put the seed in the ground, go to Florida and wait for the crop to grow, leaving it all to sunshine and the rain. I completely disagree with that concept. I believe that massive research is required in agriculture. Will the Hon. Member enlarge on this matter, particularly genetic research to increase the yield and quality of farm crops? We still have to deal with frost and hail. There is a tremendous area of research which the bright minds of our country should be working on in order that we can produce more food. I would appreciate the Hon. Member's comments on that point.

Mr. Mayer: Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member for Bow River (Mr. Taylor) is certainly a very wise gentleman. He brings to this House not only long years of experience, but long years of wisdom in his position. He is from an area of the country that is very productive agriculturally. He certainly makes some very good points.