

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

—that the Quebec Finance Minister, Mr. Gerard D. Lévesque, announced in his budget speech on May 1, 1986, that our Government has had to impose a surtax on business. This surtax will compensate for the shortfall in revenue of the Quebec Treasury caused, on the one hand, by the \$66 million payment which Quebec did not receive under the equalization program, and on the other hand, by the \$82 million reduction for 1986-87 in transfer payments for health care and post-secondary education. The Quebec Government has promised to reconsider this surtax imposed because of federal cut-backs if the federal Government keeps its commitment regarding equalization, withdraws its Bill C-96 and initiates negotiations with the provinces immediately.

Mr. Speaker, this Government told Canadians that there would have to be discussions and negotiations with all the provinces before such changes were made. However, the Government did not keep its promise. It decided to do the opposite. This Government decided to do exactly what the Liberal Government had done before. This Government decided to make cut-backs, and even though the Members opposite pretend that they are not cut-backs, it has been shown that they are indeed cut-backs and that will be very hard on all Canadians.

[English]

It is with sadness that we see this kind of back stabbing of the Canadian people, this elimination of investment which is so crucial to our future health care and post-secondary educational facilities.

Surely it is possible, somehow in this Parliament, to have us come to our senses. These expenditures must be made. We should see them as investments in the future of Canada and cease this bloodthirsty attack on the tremendous needs of people across the country in terms of their future and the future of the country in respect of post-secondary education and health.

Mr. Frith: Mr. Speaker, I have a very short question. Would the Hon. Member explain his idea of how the six and five program applied to the delivery of health care when it was instituted in 1982?

● (1640)

Mr. Langdon: Mr. Speaker, I was quoting from the Conservative campaign handbook at that stage. I assume that under the six and five program there were attempts to reduce government expenditure, and as part of that reduction in government expenditure there was damage done to the amount of funding which was supposed to be available for post-secondary education and for health care. I made that reference because the key part of the commitment in the PC campaign handbook was to provide full funding from the past, but that mandate has not been respected. Indeed, the Conservatives have gone in the opposite direction. The Conservative Government has followed the course of the previous Government rather than respecting the promises which were made to the Canadian people.

Mr. Frith: Mr. Speaker, would the Hon. Member admit to the House so it is a matter of record that when the six and five program was introduced it specifically precluded health care?

Health care was not affected by the six and five programs. I want that clear for the record, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Hon. Member for Champlain (Mr. Champagne). Excuse me, but did the Hon. Member for Essex—Windsor (Mr. Langdon) have any further comment?

Mr. Langdon: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment. I would prefer anything that I say to be put on the record by me rather than by the Hon. Member for Sudbury (Mr. Frith), much as I respect him. I think, however, that the six and five program, while it may not have cut back health care funding, did have an impact with respect to post-secondary education. If the former Minister had been following my speech closely, he might have noted that I was quoting from the PC campaign handbook with respect to post-secondary education.

[Translation]

Mr. Champagne (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the Hon. Member's speech, and I was astonished when he informed the House that the Progressive Conservative Government had failed to consult the provinces before it decided to introduce this Bill. I wonder whether he realizes that in November 1984, January 1985, May 1985, September, November, December 1985, we had discussions with the provincial Ministers of Finance on this matter. When he says that we never consulted with the provinces, I wish he would explain why we met with the provincial Ministers of Finance, and perhaps he would care to withdraw what he said and say: Mr. Speaker, I made a mistake, it is true the Progressive Conservative Government consulted with the Ministers of Finance before bringing this Bill before Parliament.

Mr. Langdon: Mr. Speaker, we have here a typical case of Conservative consultation. It is consultation that consists in making announcements and decisions and letting the provinces know about them. If it is true there is sufficient consultation, why did the Quebec Premier, in his letter, and that is the letter I quoted in this debate, why did he indicate that it was necessary to negotiate with the provinces? Why would he make such a suggestion if there is so much consultation on a decision that is a very difficult one for Canadians to accept?

[English]

Mr. Bill Attewell (Don Valley East): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to again speak on Bill C-96. I would like to give a little background before getting into the specifics of the Bill, because it is misleading and unfair not to do that. You cannot take this one Bill out of context without looking at the Government's record and looking at the broad range of initiatives on which we are moving ahead.

Let me go back to November, 1984 when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) made a statement of financial direction, further confirmed by the May, 1985 budget, that financial transfers to the provinces would be included in deficit reduction measures so as to spread expenditure restraint as broadly