

*Government Orders*

[Translation]

**Mr. Ronald J. Duhamel (Saint-Boniface):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on these amendments this afternoon.

It is surprising and somewhat intriguing that my colleagues on my left had so much to say about my party a moment ago and so little to say about the bill and its amendments. I get the feeling that the Liberal Party of Canada is much more of a threat than this bill, in spite of the fact that the latter is flawed. I found that interesting, especially since it is becoming a common occurrence. I will try to avoid putting down other parties and instead address the bill before us.

[English]

I found it interesting to talk about the record of this government. I think when you are in government that happens all the time the record of the previous government. I suspect that many people would say, and I do not do it tongue in cheek or unkindly, in terms of transfers to provinces that the Liberal record looks pretty good compared to the current record. It goes not without saying, but show me any political party, any political person, that is unblemished. I wonder if you would find them in the House of Commons. In fact, it might be very difficult to find them anywhere.

If you compare the Liberal record for transfer payments to provinces with the current government's, I think it looks pretty good. I think as well that you can compare the Liberal record with what has been happening in some of the provinces recently. Let us look at the NDP provinces; what is happening to health and education, hospitals being closed, people being laid off, fewer dollars being transferred for education.

I guess the lesson to be learned is that we have to be very careful about casting stones because, frankly, other people may get up and do the same to us. We would probably merit that when that happens.

My colleague has just indicated that provinces are getting more than they were. Yes, sometimes that is true, but we have to talk about what they are getting more of in this particular bill. Are they getting more tax points or more cash? If they are getting more cash, what are the circumstances under which they are getting it? Has it taken into account inflation? Has it taken into account, for example, the program needs? Has it taken into account student growth within those programs? Or, if we

talk about health, has it taken into account the additional clients that they have for health services?

It is very easy to say that I now have more money; but if I have more people requiring more services of me that cost money, then an increase is not necessarily an increase.

When we talk about this we must not forget that we are talking about, if my memory serves me correctly and I do not mind being corrected, \$39 billion; roughly \$24 billion for Established Programs Financing, transfer funds for health and education. That is about a ratio of 211 for health to education. Again, if my memory serves me adequately today, it is about one-half tax points, the other cash. The other \$8 billion is for equalization, to make sure that those provinces which are not as wealthy as others, relatively speaking, are in fact rewarded appropriately.

Finally, of course, there is the CAP, the Canada Assistance Plan, to assist the social programs. Some people will know that that CAP has been capped. In other words, the provinces of British Columbia, Ontario and Alberta are limited to 5 per cent growth. That has caused a lot of stress. You will recall that there has been a court challenge, and of course the animosity, the disagreement, and the discomfort continues.

One of the questions that we have to ask is this: There are a number of amendments here. There has been some reluctance on the part of the opposition parties to support this bill, which would appear to be fairly innocuous, which would appear to be primarily a technical bill, and I have been assured that that is so during committee. But we must ask the question: Why is the government running into these kinds of problems? I think, with all due respect, it is because of its record on virtually every major issue. It has often said the right things and it has often, I suspect, intended to do what was correct, but it has fallen short. Whether we look at the Constitution, the economic development of our country, or even the social programs in our society, we realize that the government probably meant well. But if we look at the result, it is obvious there is an enormous gap between what they wanted to do and what they have done. And that explains this attitude, this concern, this mistrust which is found just about everywhere. Therefore, when they come up with a bill such as this one, mainly described as a housekeeping bill with no political impact, people are wary, they are concerned, they are reluctant, they try to block it, they try to find out why it would be as straightforward as it seems to be.