

*Government Orders*

Perhaps one of the biggest problems is always that it is so very easy to massage figures and to make them appear to be much better than they actually are. At this point, I have not had a great deal of opportunity to spend much time studying it. I know as a member of the finance committee I will get that opportunity. Perhaps then my remarks will be more definite as to what is good and what is bad with this bill.

When it comes to simply extending the equalization and transfer payments for another two years, I obviously have no opposition to that. I think that the whole basis for equalization and transfer payments has helped make us Canadian.

Any Canadian who lived through the Great Depression can still picture the breadlines and the transients riding the rails across the country. I have been told many stories by my parents and my grandparents of the years of the Depression and the horrors to which Canadians were subjected.

Most of our parents and others who lived through this Great Depression thought that they would never see these sights again. They thought that never again would they see the breadlines or the homeless. I believe that this is really what was at the source of the beginnings of our great social safety network. I believe that that is where the idea of equalization came from, the idea of helping those provinces with less to achieve and maintain a certain minimum of standard.

That is where all of these government initiatives really began. By and large, they were very successful in making sure, at least up until the last few years, that never again would we see these breadlines and these homeless people.

Here we are in the 1990s faced with exactly what we thought we would never see again. In the early 1980s when we went through that terrible recession, it was thought that it was a temporary measure to help these people during a particularly bad time. Here we are. We have gone through a number of very prosperous years. Not only have we not seen the decline of these homeless, these breadlines or these soup kitchens, but we have seen a proliferation of them. The only reason is that this

social network that we created as a caring country has broken down. Therefore, the moneys that are needed are really not there.

We have forgotten what we as a government, as a governing party, as elected representatives were elected to do, and that is to look after the people of our country.

We have seen a reduction in government expenditures and non-action on others, all in the light of fighting the deficit. The government is saying it needs additional revenues to fight the deficit, so it has slashed all of these programs.

Has the deficit decreased? No. This government has presided over the doubling of the debt with its bottom line mentality of forgetting about people. Its economic policies have been absolutely disastrous. Rather than basing its policies on full unemployment, equality and decency for all it has had this bottom line mentality, this idea that fighting the deficit at all costs would save us. It has not saved us at all. We are faced with a very terrible future, far worse than any of us had ever thought we would see again.

We talk about fiscal arrangements. Regional disparities have been a problem in our country throughout our history. Without substantial financial contributions from the federal government, they would be much, much worse.

It would be much more difficult for some of the poorer provinces to provide accessible and affordable health care and higher education to their residents.

The funding framework is embodied in the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act of 1977. Originally federal support for health and higher education was to keep pace each year with over-all growth in the economy. Since 1986, support has been cut back as a result of a series of unilateral decisions by the federal government aimed at reducing the deficit. As a result, the cash portion of basic federal support has declined.

To go back to the dismantling of the system, you go back to the budget of 1986. Bill C-96 it was called. They always have a new number. It depends on when they are introduced, in what cycle. This is from the budget of