

But it does complicate matters. Though people can give an intellectual consent to the idea that, yes, we should reduce expenditures, they say, "Please don't ask me to pay my share." Well, I am afraid we do have to ask the people to pay their share.

Provinces are no exception, and I am an old provincial person, I must say—

Senator Frith: I am sitting here wondering how you would have felt at that time.

Senator Roblin:—and I have some idea of what the reaction will be in the provinces when they deal with this matter. I can understand the feeling of disappointment they will have, even if this is not as extreme as some people might fear or think.

I should let the Senate know that some of the provinces feel so strongly at the present time that they have taken the federal government to court. The Provinces of British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario have taken the federal government before the Supreme Court of British Columbia with respect to the process by which these arrangements are being put forward. The Province of Manitoba has decided to challenge this on the grounds that it is *ultra vires* of the federal government. So you can see that some of the provinces, though not all, are taking a firm position on this matter, and one does not know what the courts will decide.

Senator Gigantès: It will go before the Supreme Court of Canada some day.

Senator Roblin: The honourable senator is right. No matter what the answer is, after the Supreme Court of British Columbia has dealt with it, it will be referred to the Supreme Court of Canada. That is a fact, and I do not want to disguise that.

The hard fact is, however, that the transfers from the federal government to the provinces consist of one of the largest payments the federal government makes. It is one of the largest burdens the federal treasury has accepted in the national interest, and it will total some \$36 billion this year. These transfers to the provinces have been growing at a rate of 6.5 per cent compound per year, and when you relate the \$34 million and 6.5 per cent compound increase to the total government expenditure, and to the size of the national debt, honourable senators will understand why we have to ask the provinces to be as understanding as they possibly can when we ask them to accept the provisions of this bill.

While the transfers to the provinces have been growing at a rate of 6.5 per cent compound over the years, other federal programs the federal government is directly responsible for managing, apart altogether from interest, have been rising at the rate of 3.6 per cent per year. That is about half. So honourable senators can see that the federal government is not asking anyone to do something that it has not undertaken to do. So it is unavoidable, it seems to me, that provincial transfers should not be altogether exempted from expenditure control.

That is the substance of the matters that are in this bill. The changes in the transfers to the provinces, under Bill C-69, are

[Senator Roblin.]

indeed significant, and I do not disguise that fact, but, in perspective, it helps to know, I think, that the total amount they are being asked to take care of amounts to about eight-tenths of 1 per cent of the total provincial revenues. So honourable senators can see, in that comparison, that this probably will not be an intolerable burden for them to handle, although certainly none will find it comfortable.

It is, however, a contradiction to deficit control, and it seems to me that this is based on a reasonable rationale. This is not Draconian. It is within the capacity of the provinces to adjust to, and I hope it will receive the assent of this chamber.

If the bill receives second reading, I would suggest that it be referred to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance, as other bills in this category have been treated, for reasons already stated.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, as far as present plans are concerned, it is our intention to agree to second reading of this bill, but I should like to adjourn the debate so that I can make some comments on Tuesday.

On motion of Senator Frith, debate adjourned.

PLANT PROTECTION BILL

SECOND READING

Hon. Nathan Nurgitz moved the second reading of Bill C-67, to prevent the importation, exportation and spread of pest injurious to plants and to provide for their control and eradication and for the certification of plants and other things.

He said: Honourable senators, I take pleasure in sponsoring Bill C-67, the Plant Protection Bill, which proposes amendments to the Plant Quarantine Act. The act is being amended to clarify and improve upon the provisions of the current act. The first formal Pest Control and Eradication Act was passed in our country some 80 years ago. Since then a number of adjustments have been made to deal with the emerging issues affecting our plant-based industries.

In 1982 Agriculture Canada undertook an assessment of the effects of marketplace changes, new technology, and current legislation on our programs. The review involved private sector, provincial officials and federal departments. This process has led to Bill C-67, which will ensure the continued viability and strength of Canada's plant-based industries.

The new act, among other things, will make it possible to operate an import permit system. This system will allow Agriculture Canada to designate where and under what conditions an item for import will be inspected, to order the removal, treatment, quarantine or disposition of items found to be in contravention of the act, and to stop or enter vehicles, ships, railway cars and other conveyances for the purposes of enforcing the act.

Bill C-67 makes the importer responsible for presenting items for inspection. At the same time the proposed act is flexible enough to allow for the control or eradication of plant