

POLLUTION

RECONSIDERATION OF LEVIES ON OIL TANKER SHIPMENTS TO PROVIDE CONTINGENCY FUND IN CASE OF SPILLS

Mr. Thomas M. Bell (Saint John-Lancaster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Transport. Is the minister, along with the Minister of the Environment, giving new consideration to the levies regarding oil pollution in the Maritimes, particularly in view of the approach of the provincial governments and others to this question? If so, when will we be hearing about this new consideration?

Hon. Donald C. Jamieson (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, there is certainly no consideration being given to the possibility of abandoning the levies. What I have indicated in conversations with various maritime interests, both governmental and otherwise, is that I am prepared to be somewhat more precise than the act requires in indicating the top level of the fund and, once that level has been achieved, how we would propose to de-escalate the payments. I would hope to have a statement on this to convey to interested parties in a few days. I have also indicated my willingness to meet with them.

Mr. Speaker: Orders of the day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS ACT, 1972

AUTHORIZATION OF FISCAL PAYMENTS TO AND TAX COLLECTION AGREEMENTS WITH PROVINCES

The House resumed, from Thursday, March 2, consideration of the motion of Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton) that Bill C-8, to authorize the making of certain fiscal payments to provinces, to authorize the entry into tax collection agreements with provinces, and to amend the Established Programs (Interim Arrangements) Act, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

Mr. John Burton (Regina East): Mr. Speaker, during my remarks last night I indicated my support, and that of other hon. members of the New Democratic Party, for the principle of equalization. I said that this bill goes a long way towards implementation of the principle of equalization and that we were happy to see the progress, as indicated in this bill, made in effecting an effective equalization plan across Canada. At the same time it must also be said that I am very much alarmed, as are many people, by the prospect of certain proposals which, by one means or another, may undermine the principle of equalization. Any set of proposals which may attempt to declare the principle of equalization as unconstitutional or which may try to destroy the principle will bring about, if accepted, the greatest possible mischief to the well-being of Canada in the long run. Certainly I, for one, want to make sure that all steps are taken to ensure that the principle of equalization is not destroyed or undermined and that this

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mischief never comes about. Even though some of the proposals brought forward as alternatives to the present system may be well meaning, I think they are ill-conceived and will not achieve the objectives set for them by their proponents.

Last night in my remarks I also urged the government to take steps to broaden the revenue base in determining equalization payments and to include within the scope of the calculations and the formula used for determining the revenue base the matter of municipal revenues. This is particularly important at this time because shifts in responsibilities with regard to various government functions are taking place as between the provincial and municipal levels of government. A number of developments are taking place in various provinces which contain implications for an adequate equalization plan across Canada.

I am also concerned about the future of our health programs, and especially about federal participation in those programs. It seems to me, on the basis of certain indications which are evident at present, that the federal government is making moves in an effort to opt out of these programs in the long run. The first step in the process, of course, is limiting the federal government's contribution to these programs. As I understand the situation, the federal government has proposed that further increases in federal contributions to health programs, and federal-provincial health programs in particular, involving hospitalization and medical care, should be based upon growth in the gross national product or some other similar indicator.

Actually, health costs at present are growing more quickly than these indicators. Therefore, the government's proposal will leave the provinces holding the bag, so to speak. At the same time I think we should all be concerned about increases in health costs and also remember that we must reorganize some of our health delivery systems in Canada, while making sure at the same time that we do not decrease the quality of health care. Actually, we must take steps to improve the quality of health care across Canada. I suggest that this can only be achieved if the federal government makes it clear that it will go along with the provinces and stand behind the provinces in supporting these programs, both at present and in future.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to some further points that are of concern in our consideration of this bill. I wish to make particular reference to some remarks the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) made in introducing the bill. At one point in his speech the minister referred to the benefits of stabilization and the changes made in stabilization payments. He said, as recorded at page 435 of *Hansard*:

Another benefit of stabilization is the help it provides to provinces when they attempt to borrow on international money markets.

The minister's statement, Mr. Speaker, may be perfectly correct. Yet it seems to me that that statement conflicts with the request that the federal government some time ago made of the provinces when it asked them to refrain as much as possible from entering the international money markets in raising money for their financial