Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

Canadians places a large burden upon our provinces. However, we in the Parliament of Canada have a responsibility for employment. The provinces will tell us that they have a share in that responsibility as well. If we are to accept responsibility for the employment of Canadians, it would be irresponsible for us not to put enough federal funds into education to keep our institutions going, to keep providing quality teaching, and to put quality students out in the world who can face the challenges of today. If there are to be jobs for these people when they leave university, then we will need development, development, and more development.

There will be fewer jobs in Canada because the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion has been cut to shreds. It does not have the capacity to produce local industries to help regions as it has in the past. The Government is more interested in building up the greater metropolitan areas or cities of Canada than it is interested in the regions of Canada. If the Government continues with this procedure, we will continue to be a nation in existence 100 miles north of the Canadian-American border. We have to do better than that.

One of the main concerns raised by the provinces in this debate was that the federal Government should review its priorities. On the one hand it reimbursed the uninsured depositors of failed banks to the tune of $1 billion. It also exempted capital gains from taxation, which favoured the wealthy. It gradually stopped taxing oil and gas in the producing provinces and increased RRSP deductions. On the other hand it is cutting back on health care and post-secondary education.

Many people realize that Bill C-96 is one of the most serious issues to have come before the House of Commons. I am only sorry that there will not be more debate on it today. It shows that the Government with its huge majority is willing to ramrod the legislation through the House and that it could not care less about provincial medicare programs or post-secondary education. If there ever was a time in Canadian history when educational institutions needed considerable money to keep pace with modern day technology and to update their institutions, it is now. It is a very costly process but a very necessary process in terms of investment in the future of the country.

Earlier today I mentioned that the biggest issue at stake in the Bill is the lack of credibility of the Minister of Finance. In the past he placed statements on the record of the House, and then he turned around and did the very thing he said he would not do. At a time when the Government is on everyone's back asking them to save money and to cut back, at a time when it gives less money to provincial educational and medicare programs, it is flying Hercules aircraft with camera crews to make movies of the Prime Minister. It is trying to advertise at public expense in order to wallpaper over the major problems its financial policies are indeed creating.

● (2010)

The Conservatives promised the provinces one of the greatest honeymoons in Canadian history if they were ever elected to power. Once elected to power, they turned on the provinces. One of the first things they did was to cut transfer payments to the provinces. They are not gaining anything, and the sad part of it is that the country is not gaining anything by this process because someone will have to pay the bill. If it is not the federal Government then it will be the provinces, and if the provinces cannot afford to pay then it will fall on the municipalities, and if they cannot do so then the local taxpayers and the municipalities will have to pay higher taxes on property. It goes right down the line. There is no stopping. Contrary to what the Minister of Finance said, the buck does not stop here, it just sinks to the lowest level of Government in Canada.

We have seen and I have seen personally the promises made by the Government that have affected my own region of Canada drastically. I have mentioned the cut-backs in the Department of Regional Industrial Expansion, a Department which has had a great success story in eastern Ontario and in many areas of western Quebec. We have seen the Prime Minister welsh on his promise to retain funding for one of our greatest success stories, the high-tech industry in Canada, Atomic Energy of Canada. One of the Prime Minister's first acts was to cut its funding by $100 million. Today, in all the discussions about nuclear energy, I often wonder how many people realize that the cobalt therapy cancer treatment unit was developed at Chalk River, Ontario. There are several of those units and they are doing tremendous work. Medical radioisotopes are being produced by Atomic Energy in great amounts and are being sold abroad. There are many applications to the industry which many people do not realize because there is an emotional debate going on about nuclear energy itself.

It is unfortunate that that type of debate should be heightened by the Chernobyl accident because that incident has no relationship whatsoever to the operations of the Candu reactors in Canada. It is unfortunate that in this day of higher education and social services such as medicare the real nuclear debate in nuclear arms is leading people to turn away momentarily from the nuclear industry because they are so concerned about the international scene. With advanced education and with more money provided to our universities to train engineers nuclear energy will become more important for the future and be much better understood. Hopefully by that time, Mr. Speaker, we will have a Government that has some credibility, a Government upon which we can depend to keep its word. The Prime Minister and his friend Ronald Reagan will have lots of time after 1988 to make movies because they will not be there.

Mr. Redway: Mr. Speaker, I have two questions that I would like to put to the Hon. Member, but I would like to comment first. As you know, Sir, as the Hon. Member knows and as I know this is the thirteenth day of debate on this one