

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements

• (1520)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS**FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS ACT,
1972****AUTHORIZATION OF FISCAL PAYMENTS TO AND TAX
COLLECTION AGREEMENTS WITH PROVINCES**

The House resumed, from Wednesday, March 1, 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. Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Roberval.

Mr. C.-A. Gauthier (Roberval): Mr. Speaker, I was waiting for some order to be restored in the House. Indeed, many members were speaking louder than me.

I am pleased to comment on this bill before its reference to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

I listened very attentively to the introduction of Bill C-8 by the new Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) whom I congratulate for his courage in accepting to be the new scapegoat for that much criticized department. I always greatly admired the minister and I do not blame him at all for he is not responsible for the drafting of this bill since he did not hold that office when this bill was hatched by the technocrats.

I was nevertheless a bit surprised at his self-confidence when he spoke of co-operating with the provinces when we know that most of them are complaining about lack of consultation with the central government. Indeed, in all its relations with the provinces, especially with Quebec, this government reminds me of a steam-roller madly crushing everything that stand in its way without giving it a single thought.

Freedom of choice, acquired rights, autonomy, all that is futile to the government when they plan their federalist action. Their slogan consists in providing for ever greater centralization, even at the cost of making the provinces second rate governments.

I am sure that the minister who knows me as a sincere autonomist wishing to live in a confederation did not expect me to applaud his "supercentralization" of powers no more than I would agree to the views of the NDP about state control.

Therefore, I will speak today as a Quebec federal member. I still believe in the reviving of the true federation we had before 1942. I would like the hon. minister to believe that 90 per cent of Quebecers are still hoping that the federal government will come to its senses and will some day be honest enough to return what it borrowed during the last war, namely the tax fields belonging to Quebec and recognized in the British North America Act because, in my region, we have a principle which we

[Mr. Speaker.]

respect above all—give back undamaged to its owner whatever we have borrowed.

Yesterday, I heard a good one when the minister stated that the federal government and the provinces had equal rights of taxation and I think it is by virtue of such rights that the federal government so easily takes the provinces' place and tells them later: Now we have what we want; if you do not like it, there is always double taxation.

I understood then that the word equality for this government means: Move aside I will take your place. This is what I remember from the statement, of the Minister of Finance.

As far as the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier) goes, he came and told us that he crept into the field of education via post-secondary education and that he is there to stay. To gild the pill, he told us that it is only for two years but we know quite well that it will be for two years and then another two years and finally permanently as was done in all other fields.

I think it is high time this government examined its conscience—if it still has one—before things get worse in the province of Quebec because the population is not the only one crying for help. As a matter of fact, Quebec ministers one after the other have protested against federal interference in the affairs of their departments. Because they were Quebec liberals they thought they could stop this massive intrusion but there is no way.

Under the cover of a good samaritan, Bill C-8 calls for the concession of exclusive rights to the federal government for a period of five years.

It is always the same stratagem of soft talk we have had from this government to hide its true intentions of centralization. Let us suppose that under Bill C-8 the government is asking this House for permission to make certain donations to the provinces. This reminds me of a sated ogre throwing crumbs to the beggars. How this all seems to reflect generosity, kindness, co-operation. How the minister must have congratulated his officials for coming up with such a sentimental style.

As to that permission, the present totalitarian government need not even ask. It has it forever. But read the terms of this little donation so humbly presented and you will see that the title of the bill which is as follows speaks for itself:

An Act 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.

This bill, then, features three main aspects. First, a permission is humbly requested; then the levying of a tax is proposed and lastly, we are informed that this tax will be increased. Mr. Speaker, the cat is out of the bag and we know what the government is after: taxes, taxes, always more taxes.

All this on the other hand is a consequence of a far more subtle and older fraud which was designed to take from the provinces the three main fields of taxation, which were the only guarantee of their autonomy, their basic taxes, as we say in Quebec.

To this end, what pretext did the central government use to have the provinces swallow the pill once more? War. Not war in Canada, not even in North America, but