

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

Mr. Benjamin: Yes, lean and mean. That administration brought in deterrent fees and extra medical charges. Would the Hon. Member tell all of us if the Liberal Party has had a change of heart? If it has had a change of heart, I will applaud the Hon. Member for saying so. I would like the hon. gentleman to say whether or not the Liberal Party has had a change of heart since what happened under a Liberal regime when medicare and hospitalization was in its infancy and there was a 23-day doctors' strike and doctors were allowed to charge extra.

Second, is it not correct that the change to the 1977 formula which this Government promised to restore began when the Liberal Party was still in power? Does that mean that his Party has now had a change of heart? If he will say so, we will applaud him.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, it is not often that I have an opportunity to respond to the Hon. Member for Regina West. However, because of the few years that I have been here, I do not have the experience both in age and in the number of years serving in Parliament—

Mr. Schellenberg: You have the same amount of hair.

Mr. Dingwall: The Hon. Member is talking about hair. I was coming to that conclusion myself. There is one glaring similarity between us. We both have the same barber.

In his usual eloquent way, the Hon. Member talks about heart. In the years I have represented my constituency, I have not, with the greatest of respect, had to take lessons from the Hon. Member with regard to heart. I remind NDP Members, if they wish to be reminded and are prepared to listen, that it was not a national CCF Party that brought in medicare for Canadians, it was a Liberal Government and that fact ought not be disputed either by the Hon. Member to the left of me or by Hon. Members opposite.

In his second question, the Hon. Member made reference to the changes made in 1977 to the Established Programs Financing. I do not know if the Hon. Member intentionally or inadvertently forgot what happened in the years preceding 1977. Does he not realize that it was the collective will of the First Ministers across Canada, including members of the Hon. Member's own Party who were Members of provincial legislatures at the time, who asked time and time again that the Government create the 1977 formula? I could give more details about this, but suffice it to say that there was a will among the first Ministers, Parliament and Canadians that that formula ought to be changed from the fifty-fifty cost-sharing program, and I might add that this was being sought by my own province and by my sister and brother provinces as well.

● (2130)

I think in the long term it has proved to be not very beneficial to those regions. However, it was the will on the part of the First Ministers and Canadians of the day who sought out those changes for block funding. If there is a lesson to be

learned from block funding, it is that there are certain positive aspects to it in terms of budgetary preparations both for the provincial and federal Governments.

In fairness to the question put by the Hon. Member, all levels of Government have lost in the debate the clear objective of Established Programs Financing. It is supposed to be about people, people who want to be educated and people who want to be served under the health care system. That is the objective of the Established Programs Financing, whether we are talking about 1977, 1982, or 1986; that is the *raison d'être*.

Mr. Benjamin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the earlier comments of the Hon. Member, because the better looking fellows in this place are him and I; we have the same hairdo. I wanted to refresh his memory that it was minority Parliaments in 1963 and 1965 which brought about medicare, thanks to people like Tommy Douglas and Justice Emmett Hall.

I wonder whether he would answer the question which I directed to him. Is it not true that the decreases in funding were begun by the Liberal Government and were only continued by the Tory Government? It did not start in 1984. It started back in 1977, 1978, and 1979. Is it not correct that there is nothing new about this with the Conservative Party and that it also started with his Party when it was in power??

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset, I do not have the wealth of experience of the Hon. Member.

An Hon. Member: That is a cop-out.

Mr. Dingwall: If I were given unanimous consent of the House, perhaps I would have the time to make a few more comments for the benefit of the Hon. Member opposite.

In any event, I cannot answer the question because I was not here. The Hon. Member very conveniently forgets some of the facts. He mentioned Tommy Douglas, a great Canadian. There is no question about that. I think all Hon. Members would unanimously agree. However, he forgot to mention the work and the efforts of a former Prime Minister, in the person of Mackenzie King.

Mr. Benjamin: Oh, come on!

Mr. Dingwall: Also he forgot to mention the contribution made by the Hon. Paul Martin and that of the Hon. Allan J. MacEachen, only to mention a few. Of course the grand-daddy of them all was the former Liberal Prime Minister, in the person of Lester B. Pearson, another great Liberal Canadian Prime Minister.

I hope the Hon. Member would want to reflect upon those remarks. His partisanship is becoming a little bit too much for him. He should take the time to reflect upon history, not only the books written by socialists in various universities across the country, but also some of the objective analyses which were written by a great number of Canadians and dealt with the social programs put in place by the Liberal Party of Canada and begrudgingly supported by the New Democratic Party.