

Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is the House ready for the question? I will recognize the Hon. Member for Churchill (Mr. Murphy).

Mr. Rod Murphy (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Government House Leader (Mr. Hnatyshyn) for finding a quorum this Friday afternoon. The Government has moved a motion that the question be now put. This means that I and other Members who are interested in speaking on this issue will not have the opportunity to do so.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Murphy: I can understand the response of the Government Members because in previous opportunities to speak on this Bill I have quoted the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), the Minister of Health and Welfare (Mr. Crombie), the Minister of Employment and Immigration (Miss MacDonald), and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Crosbie). I can understand why Conservative back-benchers, and those on the front bench when they deem to show up in this place, are reluctant to hear the words of their own Cabinet Ministers. As you well know, Mr. Speaker, from your many—and some say too many—years in the House—I say that with all due respect, Mr. Speaker—what the Conservative Cabinet Ministers were saying when they were the opposition finance critic, health and welfare critic, employment critic, and justice critic, was the exact opposite of what they are doing at the present time in government.

We are presently debating a piece of legislation which will take money which would have gone to the provinces for medical services and the funding of post-secondary education. Some of the Government Members have said that that is not what the Bill will do. They say it will give more money to the provinces. That is certainly what some people would call *newspeak*. The present legislation is not due to expire until April of 1987. That legislation which was passed by this House in 1982 would have given each of the provinces more money for medicare and post-secondary education. The legislation with which we are now dealing will take that money from very essential programs which are necessary to create a sense of equality across the country.

The Ministers whom I quoted in earlier remarks said that this was unilateral action of a federal Government which was not concerned with consulting the provinces. In other words, while in opposition, the Conservatives said the Government should not pass such legislation because the Government had not consulted with the provinces. Post-secondary education and medical services are not paid for only by the federal Government but are paid for by the provinces and other agencies in conjunction with the federal Government.

In 1981 and 1982, Conservative after Conservative spoke in this House. Their theme was that we must keep co-operative federalism alive and that there should be no unilateral action by the federal Government. In 1982, the Liberals were not taking money away from the provinces. They were introducing

legislation which would cover the period from 1982 to 1987. We objected to that legislation as did the Conservatives. However, it was a recognized responsibility of the federal Government of that day to introduce legislation which would cover federal contributions to post-secondary education and medicare for the next five-year period.

The federal Liberal Governments of that time failed to negotiate that with the provinces. They could not come to any agreement. They introduced a piece of legislation which they passed without the support of most of the provinces. They did that and were attacked time after time by the present Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Epp), the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Employment and Immigration, and any number of other Members now sitting in Cabinet. The Tories condemned what they said was unilateral action. However, the Liberal Government was introducing legislation covering the next five year period. The present legislation has another year to run, until March 31, 1987. The legislation in front of us takes back money promised to the provinces under legislation which the Tories condemned as lacking in generosity and failing to recognize the rights of the provinces.

● (1410)

I have quoted the words Conservative MPs have used in the past in order to point out that they do not live up to what they said when in opposition. For that matter, they are even worse. One might say that they are stealing the money, if I can use that expression, from the provinces.

In addition to that, during the last election the Conservative Party said it would return to the 1977 funding formula which the Liberals had taken away. I do not know what the Conservative Whip was saying during the election but he knows that that was his Party's platform as shown on page 98 of its campaign handbook. I want him and other Members to know that they did not keep their election promise to the youth of this country. They did not restore the money taken away by the Liberals. No one in this House can get up and deny that.

Ms. Jewett: Where is Flora today?

Mr. Murphy: Where are any of the Ministers today?

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Murphy: I realize I do not have much time left because of time allocation, but let me say this. Mr. Justice Emmett Hall, a distinguished former member of the Conservative Party, spoke in Winnipeg on April 3. He made very clear what this legislation would do. It will hurt two groups in this society, the poor and the poorer provinces. He said that the provinces are going to have to incur more costs for medicare and that those provinces which do not have abundant resources will suffer more. He said it is obvious that there will be a lowering of standards and an inability to keep up with the state of the art in provincially owned hospitals. This from a man twice commissioned by the Government of Canada to look into