

*Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act*

I say that the actions of the Minister of Finance, in seeking to balance his books on the backs of our young people and our senior citizens—

**Mr. Nunziata:** Shameful!

**Mr. Tobin:** —are shameful, indeed, and will not allow this country to hold its head high among the community of nations. This Bill is an action that says to our senior citizens who have paid their dues, who have built this country for us, who have provided us with our resources, the infrastructure, the quality of life we have today, that as they enter their declining years, the system they built and fashioned for us, their sons and daughters, their grandchildren, can no longer afford them at this time in their lives. So, the Government will cut billions away from the health care system and, whatever happens will happen.

It is a Bill that says to the young people of Canada, to those upon whom we will depend to stay competitive in an increasingly competitive world, one where technology erupts and evolves daily, where the jobs of today become extinct tomorrow and we must stay on the cutting edge of new technology, that Canada no longer believes in itself. If we cannot believe in those people who shall follow to take up the reins of responsibility of citizenship where we have left off, then we no longer believe in ourselves or in this vision that has been passed on to us by those who have gone before.

Tonight we saw the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Mulroney) on television, talking about free trade.

**Mr. Kilgour:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Hon. Member spoke earlier today and, with great respect to him, it seems to me that the rule of relevance should exclude the sort of tangent he was following if the debate is to have any meaning here, Sir.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Hon. Member for Edmonton—Strathcona (Mr. Kilgour) would appear to have a valid point of order, but the Hon. Member for Humber—Port au Port—St. Barbe (Mr. Tobin) had not finished his sentence. I presume he will bring it close to the Bill. If not, of course, it would be out of order.

**Mr. Tobin:** But of course, Mr. Speaker. Once again, your wisdom, your experience and your calm nature has set an example for Hon. Members who would hastily jump to their feet at the first mention of their own Prime Minister. I do not know why it causes such an excitable reaction on the benches opposite. As I was saying, if the Hon. Member follows this in a coherent, logical manner, he will see the relevance to Bill C-96.

Tonight, the Prime Minister of Canada was on television for an address to the Canadian people about free trade. He used some important language tonight, some very symbolic language. He said that by the time this negotiation is over, for the first time, we will truly have “a level playing field”. What does that mean and how is it relevant to Bill C-96?

The expression “level playing field” is an American expression. Those are the words Americans use every time they suggest that Canadian industry or society is somehow subsidized and that until Canada gets rid of those subsidies, we will not have a level playing field of trade between Canada and the United States. What speaks well of the level of civilization in Canada—at least up until the introduction of Bill C-96—is that we provide the sick or aged among us with the best medical care this country can offer, irrespective of their economic circumstances. That does not happen south of the border.

There is no medicare system south of the border. There is no guaranteed, right of citizenship south of the border that if one's father, mother, child or spouse becomes ill that that member of the family will receive the best medical attention available unless, of course, one is able to dig one's hands into one's pockets to produce the cash. That is what separates us, at least in that field, from the United States. Of course, if one is to take the Prime Minister seriously, that after free trade negotiations we will truly have a level playing field, then one can only assume that Bill C-96, with all of its tragic implications and the Draconian nature of the Bill, is part of the levelling out of the playing field.

The desire of the people of Canada to have a medicare system, that quality of life for all citizens, represents a bump on the American view of the economic field. We do not say to our fishermen, *vis-à-vis* the American fishermen, “If you are ill, cough up the cash, wipe out this year's catch, this year's earnings, and we will fix your problem. If not, my friend, wait in line”.

When I hear that kind of language, which is American language, not Canadian language, “We are going to develop a level playing field”, I begin to wonder how much of the legislation of the Government of Canada—be it Bill C-96, be it the cost recovery provisions of Bill C-75 or be it Bill C-88, severing off CN Marine and user-pay on the ferry systems of Atlantic—Canada—is part of the cake the Prime Minister is baking with his friend, Ronald Reagan, who did not pay attention to the recipe and threw in some shakes and shingles, unannounced to the Prime Minister.

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It is just as the Prime Minister in his comments on free trade tonight introduced the people of Canada to a concept that they heretofore—at least up until the last election campaign when he sought his mandate—had not heard about. He did not campaign on it. It is suddenly the quest for the Holy Grail, the life of Brian. It is the “Monty-Python-on-the-Rideau Theatre”. It is suddenly his *raison d'être*. Just as the Prime Minister did not tell us in seeking our votes last time around that that was his mandate in life, so too the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) has a 360-degree object in his mouth called tongue which has the ability to flip-flop before the floor of the Parliament of Canada.