

other projects, but with respect to established programs financing, EPF, let us get some reason.

PROCEEDINGS ON ADJOURNMENT MOTION

[English]

SUBJECT MATTER OF QUESTIONS TO BE DEBATED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ethier): Order, please. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 40, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Laval (Mr. Roy)—The Economy—Inquiry whether minister will meet provincial ministers to establish program to stimulate economic recovery; the hon. member for Central Nova (Mr. MacKay)—Regional Economic Expansion—Request for measures to assist industries in Nova Scotia; the hon. member for New Westminster-Coquitlam (Miss Jewett)—External Affairs—(a) Canada-United States agreement on testing of Cruise missiles. (b) Request that agreement be tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS AND ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS FINANCING ACT, 1977

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. MacEachen that Bill C-97, to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements and Established Programs Financing Act, 1977, and to provide for payments to certain provinces, be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg-Birds Hill): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin this debate on equalization and established programs financing, or as they are also known, federal-provincial fiscal arrangements, by pointing out that the situation in which Parliament and particularly members of the opposition find themselves in is similar to the situation which led to the event known as "The Bells" over the past few weeks. By this I mean that we have before us a false dilemma.

The finance minister claims that this legislation has to go through by the end of the month. Of course, it creates a lot of pressure when a bill is brought in ten or 12 days before the end of the month when the legislation has to be passed. It is only the equalization aspects of the financial arrangements which expire at the end of March. The established programs financing aspect of the legislation could well continue past March 31, 1982, and be presumably debated for a much lengthier period of time, and it deserves to be debated for a much longer period of time.

Federal Transfers to Provinces

It is in the proposals of the government with regard to established programs financing for health care and post-secondary education that I find the most offence. Yet, we are in the situation of being presented with a package and not having the ability or the opportunity to debate it as long as it deserves.

It is appropriate to reflect for a minute on the debate that occurred the last time the established programs financing arrangements were set out by this Parliament in 1977. I have had the opportunity to look through some of the debates at that time. Our party was concerned about the fiscal arrangements coming into place at that time. Tommy Douglas, our spokesman and former leader of the party, expressed the concern of the NDP that the block-funding arrangements would lead to an erosion of health care standards in the country. He said it would lead to the situation spoken about earlier where the federal government would not have leverage over the provinces. The provinces would be given too free a hand as far as standards were concerned.

I hate to be an "I-told-you-so", but the fact is that many of the concerns expressed at that time by Mr. Douglas have turned out to be quite legitimate. I hope the government might learn from history and listen to members of the opposition, particularly the NDP, on this issue because we have a concern about medicare. We have made predictions about Liberal actions in this area in the past and on the whole they have turned out to be remarkably accurate. I ask the Minister of Finance (Mr. MacEachen), his parliamentary secretary and others who will participate in the debate this afternoon to consider that they might be wrong and to consider the predictions I am about to make as to what the present proposals will do to medicare. Consider that they might be as accurate and as legitimate as the concerns expressed by my party five years ago when the government was setting out its proposals for fiscal arrangements.

Our concern about the established programs financing is that there is going to be a cutback in the support for health care and post-secondary education. I would like Liberal backbenchers to listen to me. If they accept the rhetoric of their party and the finance minister on this, they are being deceived.

As the hon. member for Mississauga South (Mr. Blenkarn) pointed out, the revenue guarantee is a fiction. It has had no status since 1977. It is simply a term for an agreement between the federal government and the provinces which expired in 1977. While they were renegotiating the established program financing, the provinces were grumbling that this revenue guarantee agreement had expired and that the federal government was attempting to negotiate an agreement in a completely different area. The federal government told the provinces that it realized they were unhappy about the expiry of the revenue guarantee and would therefore throw in so much more money to sweeten the EPF pot and enhance the