

were brought forward, namely, to permit debate in specific areas, the proper thing to do, if the hon. member does not propose to withdraw this one as he did the last, would be to get on with it and defeat them so that we can make sure that these very valuable and worth while fiscal arrangements which exist between the federal government and the provinces of Canada will continue.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** Would the minister permit a question? He defined federal programs as programs which could be affected by the group of provincial premiers. Perhaps he would look at the title of the bill and see that it is the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act. Does he not agree that this is an embodiment of an agreement between the federal and provincial governments?

**Mr. Mahoney:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, of course but it is a federal program which is proposed to and accepted by the provinces. It is a program that has evolved over the years in a co-operative spirit and one that has worked very well. Nevertheless, it is a program that is based on federal initiatives and as such it is a federal program.

**Mr. John Burton (Regina East):** Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to lend my support to the amendment that has been moved by the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) because it seems to me that it has the effect of placing a certain power in the hands of the provinces which does not properly rest with them and should not properly rest with them. I think we should hesitate to adopt any step where the actions of the government of Canada could be vetoed by the actions of not just the legislatures but by the ministers of the provinces concerned, as was pointed out by the Minister of State (Mr. Mahoney).

It seems to me that this would be a totally faulty principle on which to carry on the operations of the federal government. It would be a totally faulty principle for this Parliament to adopt. But having said that, I think that there is a valid area of concern which should be noted by the House. It is, as was pointed out originally in the second reading debate by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner), that there is a greater degree of flexibility left in the legislation as compared to previous legislation in this field, that some of the details, some of the particulars of the new formula and the new legislation are to be worked out through regulations. While this has a certain amount of merit because of obvious difficulties and problems in dealing with a very complex problem, I think it does pose some concerns for members of parliament in terms of our exercise as legislators on behalf of the people of Canada in the control of the expenditure of money, because in fact what we are doing by allowing some definitions in other areas to be spelled out in regulations is to determine in a much more precise way than is contained in the legislation the extent to which the federal government will be making payments to the provinces.

It is the case that even some of the principles involved in making payments to the provinces are not fully spelled out, that in fact some of the principles involved in making payments to the provinces and carrying on the various programs contained within this package of legislation will have to be spelled out by regulations. Thus, there is no control by the Parliament of Canada over some of the

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money that in fact will be spent as a result of the authority granted under this legislation.

It seems to me that there is a deficiency in the legislation and that possibly there has not been adequate consideration of this point so far in the debate on the bill. It would be much more in keeping with the concern which I believe the hon. member for Edmonton West was attempting to express if we were to accept an amendment which would give parliament a greater right of veto over regulations that may subsequently be established, to have such power of veto exercised within the time period that is relevant to the passage of these regulations and which would not be delayed for a considerable period of time.

I hope that in time we will find some way to deal with this problem through the legislation, namely, to provide for whatever degree of flexibility may be necessary and desirable in the legislation while at the same time ensuring that we as members of parliament exercise a proper degree of control and authority over the spending of public money. I am not sure that that has been accomplished in the bill which is before us.

**Mr. Stanley Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre):** Mr. Speaker, I should like to add to what my colleague has said just two or three sentences. I find it a strange piece of irony that last year the former minister of justice with great fanfare piloted through the House the legislation known as the Statutory Instruments Act. We remember still how keen he was and how sincere he seemed as he expressed the desire that parliament would have the chance to exercise its authority with regard to the growing use of the power of regulation, the power of order in council. Now we have before us a bill in the name of the same individual, the very same person, who is now the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner) and yet no provision has been made for the powers that were brought before us last year with such fanfare to be used with respect to this bill. To me this is sheer irony.

**Mr. Lambert (Edmonton West):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Having ventilated the question, I am quite prepared to withdraw the amendment. Certainly I would not divide the House if we could get on to third reading. But I am disappointed that we could not get an indication from the minister that he would take some action under the Statutory Instruments Act. The government can rest assured they are going to be badgered and pushed around by us with regard to the point until they do something.

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As the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) has said, the very same minister popped all the buttons off his shirt in the pride he had in piloting the Statutory Instruments Act through the House. I should think he would now cover his head in sackcloth and ashes for the government so far as that action is concerned.

With the consent of the House I should like to withdraw the amendment.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel):** Is it agreed that the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) be allowed to withdraw motion No. 2 which has appeared in his name at the report stage of Bill C-8?