

34 per cent; New Brunswick, 38 per cent; Quebec, 16 per cent; Manitoba, 12 per cent; Saskatchewan, 13 per cent.

I think it would be interesting, too, to put on record the reaction of some of the premiers and ministers of the have-not provinces in response to the declaration by the government of British Columbia that it intended to take the federal government to court over the question of equalization payments. In St. John's, Newfoundland, finance minister John Crosbie said his province would have to close up shop if the payments were ended. In New Brunswick, Premier Richard Hatfield said he was surprised and disappointed to hear of the challenge. He added that Premier Bennett, who was born in New Brunswick, knew of the need for equalization payments and the benefits they provided directly to the people of his native province.

In Toronto, Premier Davis said Ontario was not contemplating a similar suit. In his words: "We agree with the principle of equalization; we have never disputed it." Premier Ed Schreyer of Manitoba said the position taken by British Columbia ran counter to the federal system. Senator Forsey, an acknowledged expert on constitutional law, was also quoted as saying that the threat from British Columbia on equalization is pure moonshine. He also said: "I cannot imagine any lawyer who values his reputation taking the case. He would need the skin of a rhinoceros and the head of an ostrich."

• (2100)

The whole question of federal-provincial relations has been a favourite whipping-boy in Canadian politics for many years and I imagine it will be that way for some time to come. The game of politics dictates this, yet somehow we always manage to arrive at agreements which are acceptable to the diverse views that the regions of this nation reflect. I am confident we will be able to continue in that noble pattern. It seems to me that part of this thing known as being Canadian implies a commitment to national standards and the basics of life. The means with which to achieve this may be faulty in some ways. The differences that may be expressed from time to time among provinces and between the federal government and the provinces must be solved on the basis of negotiation and sound understanding, not always on the basis that "you're the bad guys and we're the good guys".

The essence of Canadian federalism means that some form of tax equalization policies have to be followed to give the less fortunate citizens in distressed regions of this nation the same standards of medical care, hospital and education facilities, income security programs and the like, as other Canadians. Canadians as a whole have long recognized the need for and the importance of reasonably comparable levels of basic public services across the whole country without resorting to unduly burdensome levels of taxation. This is the principle on which fiscal arrangements are based. Our system is probably unequalled in any other federal country.

I am proud and happy to have been born and raised in one of the wealthier provinces of this country and to be able to contribute to confederation through the system of equalization grants. I am also happy that I live in a country where I know that if something should go wrong in my own province and we are no longer wealthy, we can look

to our more fortunate neighbours in other areas for a helping hand.

Mr. R. Gordon L. Fairweather (Fundy-Royal): Mr. Speaker, I think the previous speaker not only demonstrated to the House that one can say everything one has to say in ten minutes, but he said it in a most impressive way. Perhaps that should be a discipline for myself, but I always envy those who can put a case with brevity.

I am going to confine my comments to clause 6 of the bill, the clause that extends the post-secondary education payment program for the next two fiscal years, or till March 31, 1974. I am simply going to raise one or two questions and then discuss some of the comments that have been made about the whole problem of post-secondary education and the undoubted national interest and concern in this field by Dr. J. A. Corry, former president at Queen's University.

In his speech the minister spoke, to use his own words, of "a detailed and motivated statement on the attitude contemplated at the time"—that is, at the end of March, 1974. If the minister's statement is to be useful—I certainly hope it will be—it means that between the time this bill receives royal assent and the end of 1974 the universities and the Council of Ministers of Education of the various provinces must be heard by the Secretary of State (Mr. Pelletier).

I should like to stress the need to hear not only the university presidents but the entire university community, including the faculties and student representatives. There is some urgency to this matter because as my leader has said, and I think validly, what we are debating here is a stand pat proposal, particularly as far as post-secondary education is concerned. What we have here is really a postponement of a decision, one that has to be taken, concerning the federal thrust in this field within the next 24 months. Although 24 months may seem like a long time when one contemplates the period in the House of Commons this evening when a very agonizing series of questions have to be considered, I am sure the time is all too short.

I hope this comment is fair, but prior to 1967 the then prime minister, Right Hon. Lester Pearson, had attached to his office certain people on staff one of whom was Dr. Kenneth Taylor who, if I remember correctly, had specific responsibility for post-secondary education. Then, under the succeeding administration this responsibility was shifted to the Department of the Secretary of State. I have no quarrel with that except to say that although this very important matter is being considered at this moment, the special advisers to the Secretary of State, so I am told, have left that department. If I am incorrect, I should like to know who within the office of the Secretary of State is in charge of enunciating a national policy, a policy of the government of Canada, regarding post-secondary education. Certainly we want to hear these officials when this bill goes, as it must, to the Standing Committee on Finance, Trade and Economic Affairs. Some very fundamental questions will have to be taken up in that committee before the end of this month.

I am very conscious of escalating costs in the field of education, and coming from a have-not, or so-called poor province I am grateful for the fact that a good deal of