

*Federal-Provincial fiscal arrangements**[Translation]*

This, Mr. Speaker, is the kind of argument which Members of the majority Party, the Progressive Conservative Government, should consider carefully, anxious as they always are to draw parallels with the United States and set them up as an example. Is that what the Progressive Conservative Government would like to do? For all intents and purposes, set the financing of these health and post-secondary education programs in such a context that the quality of services no longer exists, that services be no longer readily accessible, that the provinces have no choice but to levy user fees or extra charges so as to copy the American system? We can see that the American system is a more severe drain on the economy than is the case in Canada. Besides, although the United States spend close to 2 per cent more of their gross national product on health care, 35 million Americans cannot afford to buy insurance and have no coverage of any kind.

Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative Government must be reminded of these facts because during the election campaign their leader said, hand over heart, that social programs are a sacred trust, that we must not tamper with them. And yet, barely a few months after the advent of the Conservative regime, the same Prime Minister openly contradicts what he said during the election campaign, conveniently forgets all about his own solemn commitments, and simply lets his Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) introduce Bill C-96 which shifts the tax load over to the provinces and may very well lower the quality of essential services offered to the people.

● (1640)

Mr. Speaker, I could also quote other passages from the presentation of the Manitoba Health Minister, but since our time is limited, I would like to deal with other important aspects of Bill C-96.

I have said a lot more about health care than about post-secondary education, except for the matter of foreign students, but the representatives of educational services also reminded us that post-secondary education financing in Canada was facing considerable problems and that, since we are going through a technological revolution, this was not the time to reduce the financing of this crucial aspect of Canadian activity, namely our universities, colleges and specialized teaching institutions. The result of Bill C-96 will not be simply to transfer the deficit of the Federal Minister of Finance to the Provincial Ministers, which would be serious enough, but the real effects of this Bill will be felt in the longer term, because the difficulty which our universities, colleges and specialized teaching institutions will have in recruiting qualified teachers, in keeping the qualified teachers they already have and in developing or purchasing high technology material will put them in a very precarious position, and the Government should not try to suggest that it will be possible to change the direction of post-secondary education by asking the Lord to develop the minds of Canadian men and women. I think that

people will need to be reasonably well-off to develop their intellectual faculties. Adequate financing of post-secondary education is a vital requirement for the future of this country, and I do not understand how the majority opposite can maintain that an \$8 million cut-back in transfers to community colleges, universities and hospitals will not affect the quality of services, especially in the field of post-secondary education. Mr. Speaker, everyone remembers the attitude of the Members who are now sitting to your right when this House was asked in the past to agree to specific proposals to fight inflation. There were even advertisements in the newspapers saying that, if elected, the Conservative Government would bring back the situation to what it had been before. And yet, the 6-and 5-per cent program was implemented after lengthy consultation and it worked, for inflation has now abated after hovering at that time around 10, 11 per cent. Public surveys, informed observers, everybody was asking for concrete action against inflation. The federal Government of the day took up its responsibilities, the results are now known and they benefit all citizens. But why have double standards? Why did they make so much fuss at the time about a measure that was to last two years only and was designed to solve a specific problem that impacted negatively on every worker and every public and private body in the land? The Conservatives used all kinds of arguments to try and stop a piece of legislation that was needed, and now they introduce cuts in order not to solve a problem but to shift the burden elsewhere.

This is why we fought so long and so hard on second reading, this is why we tried to have as many witnesses as possible appear before the committee.

Unfortunately, the Government used its majority to limit the number of days for hearing witnesses. But all those who appeared, without one single exception, pointed to the negative impact of Bill C-96.

Mr. Speaker, on the education side, a number of witnesses drew the attention of Members on the impact of bill C-96.

Mr. Speaker, over these last few weeks, we heard the views of men and women from all over Canada. People directly involved in the delivery of health care or education services at the university or college level appeared before us and said: Beware, do not pass this legislation. Before adopting it, if you feel that it is absolutely essential, hold consultations to see how the current quality of services could be maintained, how the money currently used could be spent in a different way, so that we may not only maintain, but improve the quality of services, and above all, make adequate services more readily available to a whole category of the population, especially senior citizens whose number is increasing and who possibly need health care more in keeping with to their needs.

But no, the Government has decided to act quickly. It has decided to transfer its problems to others, which has persuaded the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to state, in a speech before a group of British Columbia scholars, that the cuts in post-secondary education would be a disaster for the quality of teaching. And I share the concerns expressed by the Chief