

Government Orders

Those people who have a problem with Quebec nationalism will sometimes say: "Look at all the money that has gone into Quebec. It is more than they have paid into the rest of Canada". There are those in Ontario who say they are sick and tired of paying more into Confederation than they are taking out of it. All of that is pretty divisive and all of it is also pointless.

The whole idea behind transfer payments and equalization payments is that Canada is not a balance sheet. Canada is a country that is diverse, that is wonderful, and that is worth all of us sharing what we have. Some of us have more resources in some areas; some of us less in others. The whole point of Canada is that we balance, we equal, we make fair, we support people. That is what this bill is all about. It is about fairness and balance. It is the reason we have a country, that we have not fallen apart and that the 49th parallel has not been erased.

This is Bill C-60. It seems dry on paper. A lot of economic and fiscal arguments can be made on one side or another. It is Canada we are talking about, about a spirit of sharing in this country that means an awful lot to us.

I think it is not helpful when one level of government stands up, facing the same economic problems as another level, and just lays the blame at the feet of those other politicians. That is not helpful. It is only through transfer payments that the parts of Canada, the sums of Canada, are encouraged and supported. But they can only have strength from the other parts of the country if the whole of Canada is strong. Making the whole of Canada strong is what this federal government, despite its unpopularity, has been trying to do.

• (1640)

That is not easy because we have to address the fundamentals. It means competitiveness. It means deficit reduction. It means a country where 40 cents out of every tax dollar are not flushed away in interest payments and that they can go to Ontario or the premier of Ontario for his social programs because they are not being wiped away in interest payments.

Until we get to the day when we can solve that fundamental problem, we are always going to have this argument of dwindling resources. To get deficit reduction and to get the debt under control is very unglamorous and very unpopular. The government knows it and

the Prime Minister knows it, but there is no economic alternative.

Bill C-60 is at the heart of Canada. Transfer payments are at the heart of the Canadian identity. Deficit reduction is at the heart of effective transfer payments because if we do not have deficit reduction we will continue to be knee-capped by the growing debt of this country. Whoever caused it, whatever government is responsible, it does not matter. The point is that we should get rid of it before we move on.

If we want to move on and get to the point where the premiers really want to move Canada forward so that they can fund their own programs then surely members opposite have to support the government in its over-all agenda.

I would like to conclude in the final two minutes that I have by saying that I believe the people of Canada know that we are on the right track. They may not like it and it hurts a lot of times.

I have just been sitting here doing correspondence to some of my constituents. I have just grabbed a handful of letters and read a couple of comments. This letter comes from James Hall of Caledon. He writes: "I feel very strongly that Canada will lose its high standard of living fast if it does not keep ahead of world competition. It needs to concentrate on knowledge based industries and enterprises. This means the best education system in the world. Currently we have one of the worst in the western world. We need money for that, not money in interest payments but for education".

Norman Clement of Ganges, British Columbia writes: "There are simply no practical alternatives. The Prime Minister, the cabinet and the caucus are doing meaningful work in terrible times. There is simply no money to spend on programs and initiatives which might earn popularity". Exactly my point.

J. W. Cargill of Bolton writes: "I will feel happier when Canada starts living within its means. We have nothing for that rainy day and are being forced to borrow more and more against the future. With close to half the national debt owing to foreigners it is pretty scary".

It is scary and it is particularly scary when we have a lot of politicians and entrenched interests in this country which are trying to obfuscate the truth. The truth is that Canada continues to drown in a sea of debt. The individual Canadian taxpayers know it. We know it in this