

Dominion-Provincial Relations

if this opting out legislation is to be the beginning of the required development in Canada, then this government has got to get on its feet and has to expand its operations domestically and, even more importantly, in the world abroad, than it is at present doing or shows any signs of doing.

In the meantime, I am not sure what Your Honour is going to do about this amendment. I think I can say, offhand, it will not receive the support of my party. We propose to support the legislation, although I again make the comment concerning the unnecessary rigidity of it. I hope that at the end of the period for which agreements are going to be signed, there will be some amendments to the agreements that will permit of greater flexibility within certain areas of operation within each of the provinces, rather than the rigid tying down that has taken place under the conditional grants, and is being continued under Bill No. C-142.

Mr. H. A. Olson (Medicine Hat): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure whether we have the amendment moved by the hon. member for Edmonton West (Mr. Lambert) before us or not, or even whether you are ready to accept that amendment. However, I should like to address a few remarks to the bill that is before us. I have to agree with the remarks of the hon. member for Edmonton West and some of the remarks of the hon. member for Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands (Mr. Cameron), to the effect that we really do not have much before us, if you are talking about genuine transfer of responsibilities from the federal government to the provincial governments concerned.

Before I get into that, Mr. Speaker, I should like to agree perhaps a little with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Gordon) when he suggested earlier this afternoon that the programs that will be subject to negotiation with the provinces are almost all exclusively within the jurisdiction of the provincial governments. I think there could be some argument about some of the programs in schedule II, but certainly almost every one of those in schedule I relate to areas that are completely within the jurisdiction of the provincial governments. For that reason, I think the time is long past due when those responsibilities should have been handed back to the provinces. I should like also to make it abundantly clear, Mr. Speaker, that I do not consider this Bill No. C-142 to be any special bill for the province of Quebec. There are a number of provinces which made representation to

the federal government that they believed many of these programs were a provincial responsibility, and that they should not only have exclusive jurisdiction for administering them but should also have access to financial resources in order to have the capacity to deal with them.

In my opinion this bill does not provide for any true opting out arrangement at all. In the final analysis it provides only for a different form of agreement, which would be implemented by an additional agreement which the bill terms a "supplementary agreement." It is a complex and an elaborate method of making it appear that a province is acting on its own responsibility rather than taking handouts from the federal government. It is only a façade behind which the federal government would continue the agreements on its own terms, and the provinces would be charged with the responsibility of collecting the necessary funds.

If you look at clause 3(2) you will find it clearly reveals that this legislation does not leave a province any freedom to carry out the programs in any way it may desire. It must still continue the same programs in accordance with the "authorizing instrument," which is of course the original agreement, if the province expects to receive the same rate of contribution from the federal government.

Right at this juncture I would like to ask the Minister of Finance, how long must these agreements or programs be carried on in accordance with the authorizing instrument? Is this to be an interminable condition of so-called opting out, that the provinces shall continue all these programs in accordance with the authorizing agreement, which we can only take as being based on the previous agreements?

Looking at clause 3(2) it certainly does not appear that there is any termination for the length of time that the provinces must continue the programs in accordance with the decision of the Minister of Finance. In other words, they are not going to have any opportunity to change these programs unless they have agreement from the Minister of Finance, and that is not true opting out. It is certainly not transferring the administrative responsibility to the provinces, although it is charging them with the responsibility of collecting these 20 percentage points of personal income tax.

Clause 6 sets out the number of additional percentage units of personal income tax, as the Minister of Finance pointed out, up to 20 altogether, which the federal government